



Easy Money

It pays to read
Anne Ashworth's
new column
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Keegan: quit while you're ahead

Simon Barnes
page 44



Turtles on the highway of love

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30p
EVERY
WEEKDAY

PLUS: We are all explorers now

Serb peace offer 'a chess move'

Russians fail to engineer a breakthrough

By MICHAEL EVANS, TOM WALKER IN BELGRADE
AND ROGER BOYES IN BONN

THE peace mission to Belgrade by Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Prime Minister, failed to produce a breakthrough last night to bring an end to the Serb aggression in Kosovo.

After six hours of talks between Mr Primakov and President Milosevic, the Yugoslav leader offered to start reducing his forces in Kosovo if Nato first stopped bombing. He also said ethnic Albanian refugees could return freely to their homes but demanded that Nato stopped backing the Kosovo Liberation Army.

However, after being briefed in Bonn by Mr Primakov on the "peace offer", the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, said there was no deal. The proposal to with-

draw Serb troops from Kosovo in return for an end to Nato bombing was "no basis for a political solution".

The first step, he said, was to stop the killing in Kosovo immediately. President Clinton also said that Nato would press on with the airstrikes and a spokesman for Tony Blair said: "It's action, not words, that count."

Nato stepped up its activity, beginning 24-hour bombing raids on Serb troops and tanks engaged in the ethnic-cleansing attacks. RAF Harrier jets took part in bombing raids for the first time in daylight.

Mr Primakov, accompanied by Igor Ivanov, the Russian Foreign Minister, had been sent to Belgrade by President

Yeltsin to try to negotiate an agreement that would stop Nato's bombing campaign. However, as the meeting was underway Serb forces continued with their ethnic-cleansing operations. Nato reported that Serbs had fired on a column of refugees with tanks and artillery.

Mr Primakov tried to persuade Nato that the Yugoslav president was ready to back down on Kosovo. But German defence sources said: "We have had similar peace offerings from Mr Milosevic in the past and they are rarely authentic. This is a chess move."

Mr Primakov spoke of a six-point peace plan, which would include an end to military action in Kosovo, the withdrawal of all or some of the Serb units and an agreement to allow the refugees back to their homes. In return, Nato would be expected to "stop its" air strikes and lift economic sanctions.

Mr Milosevic accused Nato of starting a war and said that the Yugoslav Army was defending the nation. "It's not the first time the people of Yugoslavia have had to defend their identity and territorial sovereignty and integrity," he said.

The problem, he said, "can be solved by political means and not by dropping 1,000 tons of bombs. We are for a political solution but aggression must first stop."

Nato is considering expanding the airstrikes to include wide-scale attacks on targets throughout the whole of Yugoslavia — the so-called third phase of the air campaign. Sir Charles Guthrie, the Chief of the Defence Staff, admitted that the Nato air campaign was proceeding more slowly than desired, but said "no one ever said we would be able to achieve this overnight. It took [THE SERBS] many years to assemble and it can't be disassembled as quickly as we would like."

The discussions about wider targeting came as reports emerged of Serb forces opening fire with tanks and artillery on one column of refugees trying to leave Kosovo for Albania.

In another incident, reported by Nato, civilians from one town in Kosovo had been sent on a forced march to the Albanian border. "If these reports are confirmed it is something we haven't seen since the forced evacuation of Phnomh Penh by the Khmer Rouge," Jamie Shea, the Nato spokesman, said.



Milosevic welcoming the Russian Prime Minister, Yevgeni Primakov, to Belgrade for talks yesterday. The resultant Serb "peace offer" was dismissed

Britain cool on offer from 'serial breaker of promises'

By PHILIP WEBSTER
POLITICAL EDITOR

BRITAIN reacted coolly last night to President Milosevic's attempt to get Nato to call off its air strikes.

Senior government sources played down suggestions of any breakthrough after the talks between Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Prime Minister, and Mr Milosevic.

Downing Street and the Foreign Office said: "We want action not words." Tony Blair and Robin Cook were awaiting a full briefing from the Russians on the outcome of the talks. The Foreign Office said Mr Cook was waiting for a "full read-out".

Senior government sources said that a conditional offer was unlikely to be acceptable to Nato. The new proposals did not appear to be a breakthrough because Mr Milosevic was a "serial breaker of promises".

The Foreign Office said: "So far Milosevic has given no sign that he is serious about a permanent end to repression and violence in Kosovo." A spokesman added: "Until he demonstrates that he is serious we will continue with the Nato air strikes."

Diplomats had been braced yesterday for some kind of claimed movement to emerge from the Primakov-Milosevic talks. Ministers have no intention of calling off the raid until it is clear that Mr Milosevic

has stopped the attacks on the Kosovar Albanians and agreed that a ceasefire should be monitored, something that he would regard as a humiliation.

Mr Cook told Channel 4 News that any ceasefire must be guaranteed by an international military presence. He and Mr Blair stepped up the Government campaign to win public support for a prolonged bombing campaign, stressing that the Serb repression must be countered by an intensification of air strikes.

William Hague said that it was disturbing that Britain and its allies had apparently made little or no preparations to deal with the wave of refugees.

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OPINION

Milosevic made his first offer last night — an offer hedged with conditions that would have been unacceptable even before his forces had put most of Kosovo to the torch.

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Player's chance not snookered by jail

By PHIL YATES AND
ADAM FRESCO

WHEN your opponent in the world snooker championship has been imprisoned for four months, most players would expect a bye into the next round.

However, in a move more reminiscent of Monopoly than snooker, Dean Reynolds, jailed in December for a drink-driving offence, has not only got out of jail but has also been able to alter the terms of his curfew so that he has a chance of completing his match.

John Read, his scheduled opponent in the seventh round of the Embassy World Snooker Championship, must have been relishing an easy passage into the next round until Reynolds was released early on March 19 from Mor-

ton Hall Open Prison in Lincolnshire.

All was not lost for Read's automatic victory though, as Reynolds, formerly ranked eighth in the world, was electronically tagged and placed under curfew. The ruling was that he had to be home at 7pm, well before most snooker matches are decided.

The first nine frames of the match were due to be played at 10am yesterday, with the closing ten frames scheduled to be completed at 7pm.

But Reynolds has managed to avoid getting himself well and truly snookered and has persuaded the authorities to allow him to break the rules so he can compete in the £1.4 million competition.

The player had already been forced to withdraw from the recent Thailand Masters in Bangkok. He was helped



this time by a supportive letter to his prison governor from the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association, which emphasised the importance of his participation in the championship and explained the unconventional working hours of its members.

At the 11th hour the authori-

ties decided that special dispensation would be given for Reynolds to break his curfew and so Reynolds set off for the Shropshire venue.

Any time over the 7pm curfew that he takes will be added on to the end of his sentence.

By overcoming Read, Reynolds would guarantee himself a minimum £6,000. If he reaches the final qualifying round on Friday, he will play Jimmy White for at least £12,500 and a place in the first round draw, which takes place on BBC's *Grandstand* on Saturday.

Reynolds's curfew is due to expire on April 16: the eve of the televised stages of the world championship at The Crucible, Sheffield.

Reynolds is a former quarter-finalist in the world championship.

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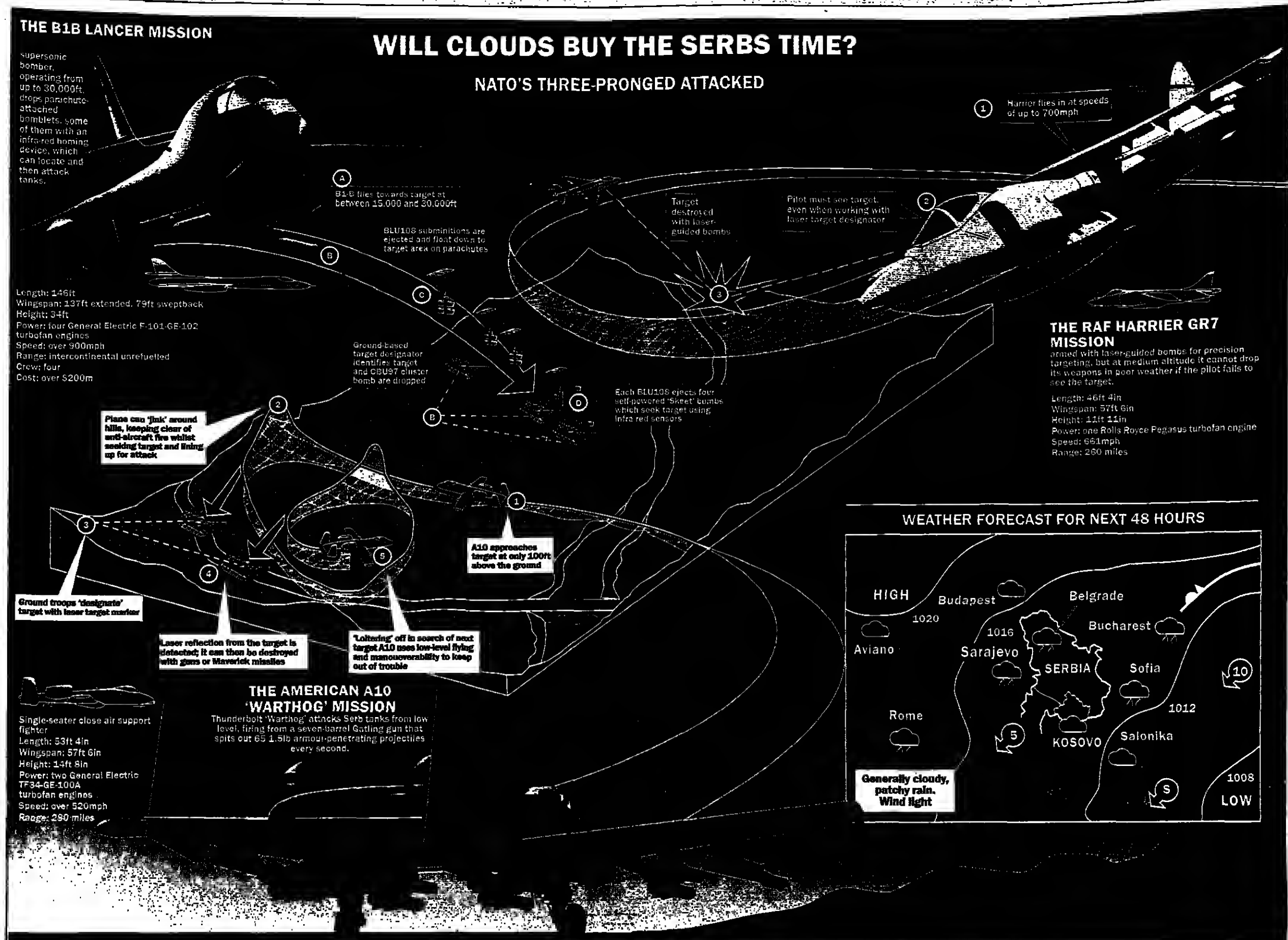
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BALKANS WAR: THE AIR CAMPAIGN



Weather holds up the bombs

Low cloud has forced Nato to rethink its strategy, writes Michael Evans

NATO has had to rethink its air campaign strategy because appalling weather conditions over Yugoslavia have been hampering medium-level, precision-guided bombing missions. The accelerated "ethnic cleansing" by the Serbs has also made it imperative to deploy aircraft capable of hitting tanks, troops and artillery.

After less than a week of bombing, mostly at night, both the United States and Britain have had to send more aircraft, because the bombers already there have been unable to deter the Serb forces from continuing their genocidal operations in Kosovo.

This is largely because the focus has been on eliminating the Serbs' comprehensive air defences. The French claimed yesterday that Nato had destroyed 50 per cent of Yugoslavia's air defence systems.

However, unlike the Gulf War when the US-led coalition had time on its side to complete one phase of the bombing before moving on to the next, Operation Allied Force has been different.

It has been unfortunate that during the six days of strategic bombing the sorties have been plagued by low cloud cover and thick mist. Many of the Nato aircraft operating from medium altitude and launching laser-guided bombs have been unable to fire their weapons because in order to designate a target with a laser beam the pilot must be able to see it to guarantee an accurate hit.

With poor weather predicted for some time to come and

no end to the ethnic cleansing, Nato commanders have had to ask for different weapon systems and start low-level bombing earlier than planned, increasing the risks for pilots.

The RAF Harrier GR7s are quite capable of operating at low level, but so far have flown exclusively at medium level, although only prosecuting their missions successfully when favourable weather has allowed.

General Sir Charles Guthrie, the Chief of the Defence Staff, said yesterday: "Smart technology is affected by poor weather and we have had a run of very poor weather."

Now Britain is preparing

eight Tornado GR1 bombers to join Operation Allied Force. Although the Tornado and Harrier have similar capabilities — they can operate day and night — there are two key differences: the Tornado is an all-weather aircraft and while the pilot still has to see the target, the bomber has terrain-following radar, making it less risky to fly at low level.

Indeed, a Tornado pilot generally prefers to fly in bad weather because if he is at low level in poor visibility it means the enemy will have difficulty in spotting him.

No one doubts the courage of the Harrier pilots, but since

weather conditions in the Balkans are notoriously bad and look set to be poor for the next week or so, it is difficult to see why the Tornados were not brought in from the beginning. Even now, it will be several days before all eight aircraft are ready for operations.

In the same way, the Americans have also decided to send more aircraft, including five B-1B bombers which are armed with anti-armour cluster bombs and can launch their weapons with incredible accuracy with the help of a "differential". Global Positioning System on board that takes precise grid references from 12

separate satellites. The supersonic swing-wing bomber is capable of penetrating sophisticated air defences and from 15,000ft to 25,000ft it can drop its cluster-bomb payload on to Serb tanks with precision and without ground-based navigation aids. If there is thick cloud cover, however, the targeting will have to be assisted by "forward air controllers" covertly deployed.

It can be assumed that these controllers are operating in Kosovo, armed with laser target markers to pinpoint Serb tanks and artillery. For small targets such as tanks, the ground-based specialist plays a crucial role.

The deployment of another five American EA-6B Prowler electronic warfare aircraft to the region underlines the dilemma of the Nato planners. Unable to continue devoting most of the aircraft to hitting Serb air defences, because of the changing priority towards tactical bombing, the only answer has been to fly more of these specialised aircraft that can jam Serb radars.

Nevertheless, judging by the way the Serbs have reacted to the bombing on the ground, the successes of the first six days of Operation Allied Force have failed to have any impact on the rapid progress of the ethnic cleansing operation.

Pilots days away from clear view

By Nigel Hawkes, Science Editor

CLOUDY weather seems likely to disrupt the Nato air campaign against Serbia for several days yet. The Meteorological Office yesterday declined to issue any forecasts for Serbia and Kosovo, on the ground that during a war a weather forecast is an item of intelligence.

The spokesman even declined to say whether cloudy weather, which has so far prevented British pilots from completing their missions on four of the six nights of the campaign, was typical for the Balkans at this time of year. But anyone with access to the Internet can get immediate access to forecasts and satellite pictures which show just how frustrating the weather is proving to be.

A heavy layer of cloud lies over the Balkans in what appears to be a settled pattern. Professor Brian Hoskins of the Department of Meteorology at Reading University says that at this time of year the Balkan weather is in a period of transition between the winter and summer patterns, making prediction difficult.

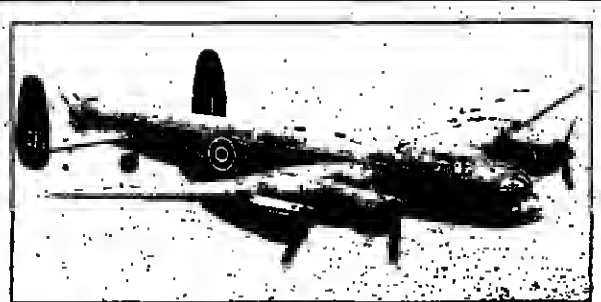
But rather than the varia-

bility which might be expected in such a transition, the pattern this year seems fairly settled. "I have had a quick look at the charts, and basically nothing is changing," he said. "I do not expect an abrupt change in the weather in the next few days." Yugoslav television is also forecasting cloudy weather for the next few days.

US forecasts provided by Weathernews Inc and available on the Net tell the same story. Their forecast for Belgrade over the next four days is little different from yesterday's weather, which was partly cloudy with a high of 61F (16C) and a low of 39F (4C). Today is expected to be very similar; on Thursday the forecast is for showers. Friday and Saturday are expected to be partly cloudy, with temperatures not very different from yesterday's. Further south in Kosovo the picture is much the same.

While this does not rule out the possibility of Nato aircraft finding clearances in the cloud, it rather looks as if the frustration will continue up to the weekend.

NATURE'S VAGARIES CAUSE MORE PROBLEMS IN A HIGH-TECH ERA



Lancaster bomber, used in the Second World War

BAD weather has always affected flying in wartime but modern technology, ironically, has made it worse (Michael Evans writes).

In the Second World War, there was no such weapon as a laser-guided smart bomb. Drones were not yet

all about precision-bombing. The military care about "collateral damage" — the need to avoid killing civilians — was not a major concern. In the Second World War, pilots could bomb blind, but without knowing for sure that they had hit the right targets. For Operation Allied Force, pilots have been given strict rules of engagement: if they cannot see the target, they must abort their mission.

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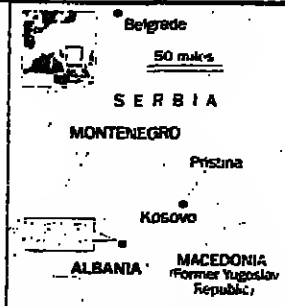
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BALKANS WAR: THE EXODUS

Nato likens 'cleansing' to Khmer Rouge terror

As refugees continue to stream into Albania, Sam Kiley in Kukes hears a chilling account of systematic slaughter in Kosovo



Thousands more Albanians flooded out of Kosovo yesterday as Nato accused Yugoslavia of waging a genocidal war comparable with the horrors of the Khmer Rouge and said that it had information that refugees trapped in a valley had been shelled by artillery and tanks.

The latest flood of refugees, about 4,500 people, arrived in Kukes yesterday afternoon. Again they told horrific stories of how they had been driven from their homes, and again their homes had been burnt.

But as Nato upped the stakes in the Kosovo conflict by shifting to attacking "secondary targets" with A10 tank-killing aircraft and promising to destroy Serbian units engaged in "ethnic re-engineering", Jamie Shea, the Nato spokesman, said that the alliance had received information that the Serbs were increasing their already high levels of mass murder.

Mr Shea said that the Serbs had launched a "Great Terror" against Kosovo's Albanian population.

The southern Serbian province's second city of Pec, with a population of 100,000, had been "almost totally destroyed", Mr Shea said.

He added that thousands of ethnic Albanians from the town of Prizren in southern Kosovo had been put on a forced march towards the Albanian border.



"If these reports are confirmed... this is something that we haven't seen since the forced evacuation of Phnom Penh in Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge during the 1970s," Mr Shea said.

Refugees from Prizren have been pouring into Albania for two days.

One, Liman Thaci, an imam from the village of Brezovac, staggered into Kukes devastated by what he had seen. Six days ago his village was surrounded by Serbs who opened fire upon the houses with artillery. He took cover in a ditch, which saved him to give the most compelling testimony of systematic slaughter heard so far.

"The Serbs rounded up all the young men. There were about 35 people that I knew who were held in the main square of our village. The Serbs then started cutting off their noses and their ears. Then they broke their legs with rifle butts, and then shot

them down. I only survived by escaping while they concentrated on killing," said the imam, who brought with him a list of the men he watched die.

He fled into the surrounding mountains where he joined about 3,000 other refugees. Then the Serbs came again, killed three more men, and forced the survivors on to buses and trucks to take them to the Albanian border.

Air Commodore David Wilby, Nato's military spokesman, yesterday said that the level of this sort of atrocity was being expanded by the Serbs.

Near the town of Urosevac, he said, Nato had confirmed reports that refugees were being shelled with heavy weapons.

Yesterday the roar of Nato aircraft high in the skies over Kosovo could be clearly heard from the border with Albania near Kukes while Serb infantry trained their weapons on

anxious relatives of Albanians still trapped in Yugoslavia.

But few appear to have been spared the clear-out. Young men who have not fled to join the Kosovo Liberation Army have been lucky to join the refugees. Old men face execution if they are unable to leave their homes.

Yesterday the last Albanian left in Dobrus, about a mile from the Kosovo-Albania border, was forced out of his home.

Ibrahim Sarameti, bent with age, was ordered out of his home on pain of death. His walking stick tapped a lonely retreat on the concrete road between Kosovo and Albania as Serb police waved him off with a dismissive back hand.

His son, who fled two days before, was waiting to greet him: their reunion would have been moving, had it not been so pathetic. "I'll go back just to get rid of the Serbs," said the old farmer.



Safe: the Mitras in Blace, Macedonia, after forsaking their home in Pristina Photograph: Simon Walker

Family's fate lay in a child's shoe

THE Mitra family's life savings were hidden in the shoe of four-year-old Gem. His parents told their youngest son he had to pretend to be asleep any time they ran into Serb gunmen at road blocks on their escape from Kosovo.

Blendi Mitra had agonised for five days about whether to abandon his successful car business in Pristina, but when a Serb neighbour called on the family a couple of nights ago his mind was made up. "I have known this man all my life, but there he was in my home where our families regularly eat together, holding a gun and telling me we should go right away or Arkan's paramilitaries will slit our throats."

Mr Mitra, 44, discussed the ultimatum with his wife, Azije, a teacher and his brother, Lulz, who had a bakery and shared the three-storey villa built by their father. They elected to run, but it took more than 24 hours to cover the 50 miles to the border where they crossed yesterday, exhausted and uncertain of where to go next.

When the Nato airstrikes began, Mr Mitra said, the family barricaded themselves inside their home, their phones and electricity cut off.

But they were unable to sleep because of the explosions outside. Through the shutters, he said, he watched homes and offices of fellow ethnic Albanians picked clean by looters the minute the occupants left.

The Serbs are embarked on a systematic campaign to drive out Pristina's professional classes, like the Mitras, and make sure that businessmen, teachers and professional classes can never return.

"All this started 20 years ago," he added. "They closed my wife's school to Albanians, so she's been teaching children at our home." A tall, soft-spoken figure, he recounted how the couple first met at school.

"My wife was among the cleverest, so she was taught Russian. I was at the bottom



Daniel McGrory hears the story of one family's 24-hour drive to the safety of Blace, on the border between Kosovo and Macedonia



end of class, so I learnt English."

After university the couple married and went into teaching. "Twelve years ago a Serb was given my job, so I started my own car business and was earning around £1,000 a month, which is good money in Pristina." Looking back over his shoulder, he jabbed his thumb towards the hills of Kosovo and said: "Life there is finished for me now. Part of me wanted to defend my work. It was also a gamble whether we would be any safer making a dash for the border than hiding in our home."

Mr Mitra retrieved the DM20,000 (almost £7,000) from under the sole of one of his son's trainers and said: "We are lucky we didn't lose this."

On the edge of Pristina, Mr Mitra's silver Audi Qatro was stopped and he was forced to pay DM1,000. "I saw a friend who could not find his money in time. The soldiers pulled him out of the car with his family and hit them, even the children. The Serbs then took his car and told them to walk."

Mr Mitra had to pay three more bribes, the last one to a Macedonian guard who made them wait nine hours to cross the border.

Stretched out behind them were another 2,000 vehicles, including his brother, his wife and their three children. For another two hours Mr Mitra parked at the roadside and waited.

"We were so afraid the Macedonians might suddenly

close the border or send them back." When he saw his brother's BMW ease through the crossing post, the two men embraced in the middle of the road, tears of relief rolling down their cheeks.

Their faces were grey with fatigue and fear. Lulz, 42, said: "At times I never thought we would make it, but if it takes the rest of my life I will go back. That is my home and no one has a right to take it from me."

Even before he left, neighbours told how his thriving bakery business had been seized by Serbs who worked for him. A half-eaten loaf he had baked lay on the back shelf of his car - all his family had taken to eat on their journey. Only now they were safe did the brothers begin a roadside conference about where to rebuild their lives.

Mr Mitra said: "We will use our money to rent an apartment in Skopje, or failing that we will go to Turkey or anywhere that will have us, and we will work hard to start all over again."

His daughter Liseta, 13, had heard graphic stories of what Serb soldiers had done to girls of her age and sat mute for the

entire journey, an anorak covering her face. Twelve-year-old Zegin admitted that he was scared of being shot, while his younger brother, Gem, just complained about the discomfort caused by the wedge of money stashed under his heel.

Their mother, Azije, 44, said: "The Serbs have dropped their version of the neutron bomb. Our city, our businesses and homes are still there, but the people are disappearing. Half of Pristina is empty."

Mr Mitra watched refugees from farming villages slowly walking down the mountain-side and said: "It doesn't matter how rich you are, we are all refugees."

A few hours previously one of Kosovo's richer businessmen had been escorted to the border by a Serb police convoy and moved to the front of the queue. The man had reportedly handed his many interests in Gnjilane to the city's police chief in return for a safe passage.

There was no one from any aid organisation or the Macedonian Government at the border yesterday to help the likes of the Mitra family. But officials in Skopje have denied suggestions that they will allow only professionals to stay and try to move on the poorer refugees.

The local Albanian community was calling on every family in the capital to take in refugees. One of its leaders said: "Rich or poor they have all lost their homes and are suffering. What none of us know is how many more are still to come."

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BALKANS WAR: THE EXODUS

Cries of despair echo on the Net

A CLICK of the mouse and the vivid snapshots of despair go round the world.

"There are many executions going on."

"The Serbs burned the house of R.S. He lived near the factory."

"I am sitting in the dark because it is an air raid. Maybe a Tomahawk will hit us."

With journalists banned from Kosovo and forced to rely on the accounts of wretched refugees pouring over the borders, the Internet has replaced crackling telephone lines as the most effective means of relaying eyewitness reports to the outside world.

As well as sending private messages to family and friends, those with access to computers have been clogging Internet chat rooms to bring their stories to wider audiences.

And both sides in the conflict have been fighting the first Internet war on their own websites, competing to win the propaganda battle.

"Our friends in Gjakova have gone silent. They are killing people there and we fear for them," a woman from Pristina wrote on one chat site.

An e-mail from a doctor in Gjakova, received by The Washington Post, described the scene in the town.

"There are many executions going on. I didn't manage to make my family flee, so I am very concerned about their safety. You remember the doctor. He was executed last

A website war of words is raging, writes **Damian Whitworth**

night. All old part of Gjakova burnt down. Several families are executed... Bajram Kelmendi with his two sons is executed."

As a means of smuggling out information it is so much easier than the coded radio messages or midnight plane pick-ups on isolated beaches favoured by French Resistance fighters during the Second World War.

LINKS

<http://www.information.com/yugoslav.htm> - Links to sites covering the Kosovo crisis and "chat room", an area in an Internet link provider's service where users can communicate directly with others who share the same interests.

<http://www.mod.uk/news/kosovo.htm> - Ministry of Defence site dedicated to Kosovo conflict, with speeches by ministers, maps, balance of forces, chronology and UN resolutions.

<http://www.mediacenter.org> - Pristina-based agency giving news and analysis from Serb point of view.

<http://www.zik.com/yugoslav.htm> - Kosovo Liberation Army website offering KLA declarations, interviews and chronology.

<http://www.warfare.net> - Institute for War and Peace Reporting, independent group with wide range of reports on war, human rights, and conflict.

But there have been reports of hitherto busy Internet correspondents going silent suddenly. The information flowing out is often sketchy, occasionally faintly hilarious.

A woman from Sabac in southern Serbia described a crater "as big as a house" made by a stray bomb.

"The peasants had gone into the hole and were looking around. The man whose cornfield this was said he was going to charge tickets for those who wanted to see the hole."

The Serbs have been filling their websites with virulent attacks on the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) guerrillas, branding them as terrorists, and claiming that they are using the Nato raids as a cover to step up their own attacks.

In return, the KLA has posted a picture on its website of a baby that it claims was slain by Serb paramilitaries, and displayed e-mail messages from Kosovo Albanians recounting alleged atrocities. One, from a man to his friend, read:

"In Podujeva the situation is bad. We spoke to Uncle I last night and he said that the area of the city towards the brick factory was on fire."

"The Serbs burned down the house of R.S. He lived near the factory. Uncle I said that there are armed Serb paramilitary groups all over the city. He said that he has no idea where his family is."

"I hope this ends quick, and at the end... the people of Kosovo get to see some freedom. After all, I'd rather die from Nato bombs than from Serbian tortures, rapes, massacres."



Keyes's view in Dublin's Evening Herald of the Internet as an up-to-date channel of information on the Kosovo conflict

"I long to destroy any and all who stand in the way of democracy. If ground forces are sent to Kosovo I can only hope that my unit is called."

"I long to see and smell the blood of our enemies. (sic) Serbia is just that... an American enemy."

motivated American killer. I train daily to give the enemy the best opportunity to give their lives for their country."

"I long to destroy any and all who stand in the way of democracy. If ground forces are sent to Kosovo I can only hope that my unit is called."

"I long to see and smell the blood of our enemies. (sic) Serbia is just that... an American enemy."

Warn your ill train, and ill equipped soldiers that many more of me feel this way. To all of the Serbs that read this comment... may God help you."

Visnja from Belgrade contributed: "Presently (sic) I am sitting up in a high building where I live now, surfing the Internet."

"Everything is completely dark, and my room is in darkness be-

cause it is an air raid time now. Since my building is very tall maybe a Tomahawk will hit it by accident."

"But who cares? This is no time to be against anything. We have to sit in our shelters and listen to patriot songs... There is nothing left but to wait."

"Anyway, I must go to shelter and get off of the Net. Bye bye to all good souls of the world."

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Anger on snowy road to exile



Janine di Giovanni in Rozaje witnesses Balkan history repeating itself as 'ethnic cleansing' creates yet another humanitarian tragedy



I HAVE seen this before, but it does not make the impact less dramatic. A column of people, walking over a snowy mountain path, exhausted, stunned and emotional.

The children, as many as seven crammed into a car, with their frightened faces pressed against the windscreen, waving goodbye. The man trying to ride his bicycle through the path in the snow; the woman still in her bedroom slippers. All of them with their lives in a few plastic carrier bags.

On their faces is etched the same confusion, the same fear, the same uncertainty that I saw during the many refugee crises of the Bosnian war, only this time there is something else. There is anger and resentment as the Nato airstrikes meant to save them have caused even more damage and heartache.

"I have lost everything," said one 61-year-old man who formerly worked as a film editor for the Italian film industry. As he walked alone down the snowy road, he said: "Please, please tell them to leave us alone."

Police in this tiny mountain town on the Kosovo border say that since Saturday some 17,000 people have crossed the border fleeing the wrath of the Serbian militias, which are believed to include Arkan's Tigers and the White Eagles.

Both groups played prominent roles in the "ethnic cleansing" of the Bosnian war.

There are no foreigners left in Kosovo, and the testimony of the people coming out is horrific. They tell of the same terror: first of the windows of their houses being broken, then the doors forced open by gunmen who order them to leave immediately. Then the journey over the mountains and the final humiliation: being forced to pay DM100 (£33) per car by Serb border police as they are forced to leave their own country.

These refugees are different from the Bosnians who prayed for airstrikes throughout their grueling three-year war. These people do not want bombing. They want ground troops to protect them. They say that since the airstrikes started the Serbs have escalated their vicious campaigns against ethnic Albanians, making them pay for Nato's actions.

"Tell the Americans that Pec is burning," said one middle-aged woman who collapsed into her daughter's arms. Pec is the Kosovo city where most of these refugees come from.

"Tell them that people are still left there. Tell them to send a ground invasion."

Caught between an embattled Serbia and the Nato onslaught, Montenegro is in danger of being swept away, according to its President, an outspoken critic of Slobodan Milosevic.

Milo Djukanovic gave a warning yesterday that Montenegro, the only former Yugoslav republic to remain with Serbia in the rump of Yugoslavia, could be caught up in the present spiral of violence. He said there was "a serious impending danger in which our state could disappear".

Mr Djukanovic, leader of the Democratic Party Socialists, who came to power last year, has been trying to distance his republic economically and politically from Belgrade as fast as possible. But Nato is now pounding mili-

itary installations in Montenegro, while 30,000 Kosovans have poured across the border seeking refuge.

Even during the current crisis he has not softened his criticism of the Serb leader. "It is wrong to concentrate on Milosevic as the only person to discuss the pact of peace on the Balkans," Mr Djukanovic said last night, all but dismissing Mr Milosevic's position.

It is no secret that the 37-year-old President has long harboured ambitions to replace the Serb leader. Even news broadcasts in Montenegro refer to Belgrade as "the so-called Federal Government of Yugoslavia".

On the other side is the Socialist Peoples Party of Momir Bulatovic, the federal Prime Minister in Belgrade

and the former Montenegrin President. Although Mr Bulatovic has been marginalised and his party is now run by a relative, he has strong support in the north of Montenegro and he is seen by many here as Mr Milosevic's puppet.

Mr Djukanovic draws his support from the south and from the ethnic Albanians to whom he has made heartfelt promises of democratic reform and decentralisation of government during his presidential campaign. He is seen for the large part as having kept his promise.

There are rumours that Montenegro will be the next Yugoslav republic to break away from Belgrade and descend into war as well as talk of a possible of a coup or a revolution.

By JANINE DI GIOVANNI

Bujar, a young man who worked as a guard for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, was taking his pregnant wife across the border.

"I don't know where we'll go. I don't know who will let us in," he said.

As a former worker for the OSCE, members of which are allegedly being rounded up and shot by the Serbian militias, he was exceptionally vulnerable.

He spoke of the burning villages, the sound of gunshots and the final moment when he knew that he must take his wife and go. "We left at gunpoint," he said.

What is the most terrifying scenario is that there are no eyes and ears to witness or report the atrocities going on inside Kosovo.

The refugees passing through the Serb checkpoint at Savine Vode who turn and look at their homeland for the last time are the sole witnesses to the horror that is taking place three miles from where I stand.

"One thing here makes me happy," said one local observer, "at least there are a lot of young men coming over."

When I asked her to explain, she said: "It means they're not rounding them up and killing them."

KLA say we war bombin to go on

By MICHAEL BERRY

THE Government has launched a campaign against the KLA, saying it is a terrorist organisation. The KLA, however, says it is a liberation army.

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BALKANS WAR: STEPS TO PEACE

Nato chief hints at deal with Milosevic to halt offensive

End to killings is the priority.

Javier Solana tells Charles Bremner in Brussels



Javier Solana, Nato's leader, above, is confident the conflict will end soon. His spokesman, Jamie Shea, below, spoke of a Milosevic 'masterplan'



Cook: apartheid in Europe unacceptable

KLA says 'we want bombing to go on'

By MICHAEL BINYON
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

THE Government yesterday launched a counter-offensive against critics of the Nato airstrikes, producing three Albanian spokesmen who insisted that every Kosovo Albanian supported the attacks.

At a press conference Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, presented the three Albanians, including a Kosovo Liberation Army representative, to justify the Nato actions and denounce the "appalling genocide and brutal ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo.

"We've just defeated apartheid in South Africa. We are not going to accept apartheid in Europe," he said. "President Milosevic has gone down the road of ethnic cleansing several times in the last decade. It's time that road was blocked off."

Mr Cook said the refugees were not fleeing the Nato planes; they were fleeing Mr Milosevic's army.

The three Albanians said that they wholeheartedly backed the airstrikes and wanted Nato to redouble its efforts. The situation in Kosovo could "hardly be worse", said Professor Isa Zubejri, head of the Kosovo Information Centre in Britain. But he said the Kosovo people were "fully in accord" with the Nato actions.

Bardhyl Mahmuti, the KLA's representative in Geneva, said those who criticised Nato were supporting fascism in Europe.

Amide Latifi, a former journalist in Kosovo, said all women in the province supported the airstrikes. But she added: "On my phone calls to Kosovo, I smell death."

NATO yesterday appeared to shift its priorities in the Balkan crisis, saying that its top objective was to secure a halt to the killings in Kosovo and it doubted whether President Milosevic could be forced to sign the Rambouillet peace accord.

Javier Solana, the Secretary-General of the alliance, hinted that Nato could suspend its offensive if Mr Milosevic halted his forces and took steps that stopped short of earlier Nato demands. His remarks came as word spread of a ceasefire offer by the Yugoslav President to Yevgeni Primakov, Russia's Prime Minister. "Our objective is to stop the killing. It is the number one objective at this point. We cannot think of anything else," said Solana. Asked about the allied demand that President Milosevic sign the Rambouillet accord, reached in France last January, he said: "So much has happened in the last few days, I do not know if this is possible or not."

Until yesterday, allied leaders had been insisting that Serbian acceptance of the Rambouillet deal, accepted by the Kosovo Albanians, was a basic condition for halting Nato's action. The deal requires the presence of a Nato peacekeeping force in Kosovo.

"Mr Milosevic must still negotiate and agree to allow the return of the ethnic Albanian population," said Solana. "The return of the refugees must be a condition. We cannot accept a *fait accompli*."

However, his shift in emphasis away from the accord, which allows for an autonomous Kosovo within Serbia, suggested that Nato could be prepared to accept compromise terms from Mr Milosevic. This raised the possibility that Nato could accept the emerging Primakov deal.

Solana denied that the alliance had been taken by surprise by the speed and brutality of the Serbian operation and he said the original goal had not changed. "We never said that we could bomb Milosevic until he came back to the table. ... getting someone back to the table cannot be achieved militarily," he said.

His remarks also appeared to acknowledge that the Nato operation had not fulfilled an

initial hope that it could stem Mr Milosevic into halting his campaign in Kosovo within days.

Speaking for an hour in his office at Nato headquarters, Solana said he was in daily contact with all allied leaders — he had just spoken to Tony Blair — and there was total unity in the 19-member alliance on the Nato operation. He said no plans were being prepared for an allied ground offensive, an operation which would take weeks to organise. He was certain the conflict would be over before Nato's 50th anniversary summit in Washington on April 23.

"It is not going to be resolved in 24 hours," said Solana. "Public opinion has to be prepared for this." He was convinced that Mr Milosevic was being progressively weakened. "He is more and more isolated every day."

Officials said they hoped Mr Primakov would succeed in his Belgrade mission. A welcome side-effect would be to bind Russia closer to the alliance and its strategic objec-

tives in the Balkans. Jamie Shea, Solana's spokesman, said the alliance had been "shocked by the sheer proportions" of Serbia's operation against the Kosovan people. Nato had reports that Serbian forces had used tanks and heavy artillery to attack a column of refugees. It was clear to Nato that Mr Milosevic had a long-arranged "masterplan" to expel the Kosovo population.

Officials said the goal was for Nato aircraft to continue pounding Serbian forces which were committing massacres and driving the Kosovo Albanian population out of the country. Men of military age were being taken away separately and Nato did not know what was happening to them.

Women and children were "in many cases provided with free transport," Mr Shea said. "They are simply busing people to the frontier to get them out as quickly as possible. You don't improvise a whole bus fleet if you haven't planned this operation a long time in advance."

Blair seeks to keep public opinion on side

Government steps up its drive to woo the doubters, writes Philip Webster

REFUGEES fleeing Kosovo are pleading for Nato to maintain air attacks on the Serbs. Tony Blair said yesterday as the Government intensified efforts to keep public opinion on its side for a long bombing campaign.

The Prime Minister, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, and other ministers strengthened their denials that the Nato action had provoked Serb atrocities and argued that the answer to what was happening was to escalate the bombing.

Mr Cook predicted that public opinion would harden as a result of the reported massacres.

Mr Blair, in his most emotional remarks since the bombing began last week, said Nato had to "get in and hit Milosevic and his murderous thugs very, very hard. That is what we intend to do". The Prime Minister emphasised: "There are risks to our forces. And, as I said when this campaign began, there are risks to the Kosovo Albanians."

"But those refugees fleeing their homes are not saying 'Stop the bombing'. They are saying 'Stop the Serbs'. They are saying 'Keep up the attacks, don't stop now'. We will not let them down."

Mr Blair, who was visiting a college in north Belfast, said: "The stories being told by refugees as they pour into neighbouring countries are stories of unimaginable suffering and barbarism — of rape, torture, the wholesale destruction of entire communities."

"This is happening on our doorstep, and we simply cannot stand by and let it happen."

Do not let anybody tell you that the airstrikes are causing the exodus. It is the programme of ethnic cleansing that is causing the exodus and Nato action is the only way to stop that programme. "This plan of Milosevic has been in place for a long time. Before any airstrikes took place, he was gathering 40,000 troops and 300 tanks there to carry out this campaign," Mr Blair went on. "Two thousand people had been killed since the summer. Even this time last week, before a single Nato bomb had struck, 250,000 Kosovars — one in 10 of the population — had been made homeless by the Serb repression."

Mr Cook told political correspondents that the atrocities in Kosovo would harden the resolve of the public as well as the Government "to demonstrate that we cannot tolerate this form of barbarity from the middle ages within the Europe of the late twentieth century. Nobody would want us now to walk away from it. I believe public support is there. It will have been as moved as I have been by the information coming out of Kosovo."

He continued to rule out the use of ground troops in present circumstances.

KOSOVO SUMMARY

US poll backs attacks

Washington: Most Americans approve of the Nato strategy of airstrikes against Serbian targets, the latest poll shows, but opinion is divided on whether any US ground troops should be deployed (Ben Macintyre writes). The poll, by the Pew Research Centre for People and the Press, indicated that 60 per cent supported raids, with 30 per cent opposed, and 50 per cent against a ground force.

Sightseers diverted

Aviano: Italian authorities have closed roads around the US Air Force base here to ease traffic jams caused by curious passersby trying to catch a glimpse of fighter jets taking off. Until April 6, only those with authorisation will be permitted near the base. (AFP)

Concerts get kiss of death

Moscow: Anti-American feeling in Russia over Nato airstrikes has prompted Kiss, the veteran US rock group known for their elaborate facial make-up, to cancel three concert dates here this week. The US Embassy advised the group to delay their tour. (Reuters)

50 pupils expelled

Nicosia: A Cyprus private school is expelling all its 50 American and British pupils in protest at the Nato bombing. Palace College head Michael Papachrysostomou said fees would not be refunded. (AFP)

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A British servicewoman examines a bomb fitted to a Harrier GR7 fighter at the Gioia del Colle base in Italy.

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Leahy's view in Brisbane's *Courier Mail* of the Balkans maze confronting Nato troops

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BALKANS WAR: AID EMERGENCY

Charities plan joint Kosovo relief appeal

BRITISH charities are considering a rare joint appeal to fund a huge relief operation for refugees fleeing Kosovo.

Such a move is unusual for a disaster caused by conflict rather than natural forces, such as earthquake or floods. But it was becoming clear yesterday, as tens of thousands of people continued to pour across the Albanian border, that charities would not be able to cope without a big injection of funds.

The appeal would involve a two-week campaign, including television and radio broadcasts and newspaper advertisements. It would be fronted by two celebrities — in the past Michael Palin, Tom Conti, Nigel Havers and Martin Clunes have backed appeals.

The campaign would also involve setting up telephone lines for credit card pledges, and donations made by cheque would be handled free of charge by banks. The Disasters Emergency Committee represents 15 charities. During the campaign charities are prevented from running their own, individual, appeals.

The Red Cross, which is sending 240 tonnes of food to Albania, was the first to launch its own appeal, beginning a national newspaper advertising campaign. Save the Children said it might follow. Leading charities last night

Aid agencies treat the conflict like a natural disaster, writes Adrian Lee

said a joint appeal, headed by the committee, an umbrella organisation, was likely. An announcement could be made in a few days.

A committee spokesman confirmed that discussions had begun, and a further meeting was planned for today. Save the Children, the Red Cross and Oxfam are all involved in the talks.

British aid workers are already at the forefront of the international operation to help the refugees from Kosovo. Teams with expertise in humanitarian disasters are on their way to the region.

KOSOVO AID OPERATION

www.life.org — Website of the International Red Cross

www.savethechildren.org.uk — Save the Children

www.oxfam.org — Oxfam

At the headquarters of the British Red Cross, Mike Goodhand, a former policeman, spent the day negotiating the purchase of 77,000lbs of white beans and other staple supplies which will form about 15,000 food parcels, bound for the region.

Other charities were sending clothes, water and medical kits. The first plane load of government aid, 450 tents and 16,000 blankets, was expected to arrive in Albania last night.

Clare Short, the International Development Secretary, said that the humanitarian crisis in and around Kosovo had "rapidly deteriorated" in the past 48 hours.

Charities involved in the operation appealed for the public to give money, not clothes or food. Mr Goodhand, 41, the Red Cross's head of logistics, who was given the task of buying and delivering 240 tonnes of food to the refugees by Sunday, said he could bulk buy supplies at a third of the cost of British supermarkets.

Yesterday his shopping list also included 33,000lbs of pasta, 66,000lbs of cooking oil and 396,000lbs of flour. Using a network of contacts around the world, the veteran of previous disasters, including Sudan, was able to secure most of the food from a supplier in Greece. From there, it will be transported in 12 articulated lorries to Tirana, broken up into smaller loads and driven 100 miles on treacherous roads to Kukes, on the Kosovo border.

At a warehouse in Reading, two lorries organised by Children's Aid were yesterday loaded with clothes and shoes bound for the Albanian border.



Paul Roberts, of Children's Aid, supervises at Reading yesterday the loading of emergency relief supplies for Kosovo refugees

der. The charity appealed for financial donations to send more supplies: the cost of each journey is £3,000.

Paul Roberts, the charity's programme manager, returned from Pristina last week, shortly before aid agencies pulled out of Kosovo. "It was very tense," he said.

"Most of the aid is going to the Albanian population in an area which the Serb community considers is theirs. As a result aid workers were suffering direct intimidation. Our members had stones thrown at their vehicles and were beaten."

Mr Roberts will return to the region in the next few days. Unable to return to Kosovo, he will be based in Macedonia.

Cafod, the Catholic aid agency, said yesterday that it was extending a project which offers psychological help for refugees who have been traumatised by their experiences in Kosovo.

Save the Children placed five extra workers on standby to fly to Macedonia and Albania. Supplies of cooking utensils, clothes and rehydration kits are on their way to the region. Oxfam said it would send seven extra workers, as well as water, clothes, tents and sanitation supplies.

British airlift begins as the West hastens to assist devastated region

By MICHAEL BINYON
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

A BRITISH transport aircraft loaded with tents and blankets left yesterday for Albania as Western governments and international relief agencies began a massive effort to rush supplies to the thousands of destitute refugees pouring out of Kosovo.

The Russian-built Ilyushin 76 aircraft, chartered by the Department for International Development, flew from Kent International Airport in Manston to Ancona, Italy, and at first light today will go on to Tirana. Nato would allow it to fly there yesterday after dark. Loaded with 450 six-person tents and 16,000 blankets, it was the first of several aircraft planned to take British aid to the area over the next week.

It flew in as donor countries, the International Red Cross and United Nations agencies met in Geneva to co-ordinate the huge effort to feed and shelter the refugees.

Tomorrow UN relief officials will draw up a new international appeal for money, as the \$64 million (£39 million) raised so far is rapidly running out. Next week there will be a full diplomatic summit to assess the reception centres in Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro and to decide what should be done with the refugees.

Britain yesterday took a tough stance on opening the way for refugees coming to the UK. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said that their long-term future must be to return to their homeland. Accepting them into Britain would be to help President Milosevic in his "ethnic cleansing", he said.

Germany, which is co-ordinating the European Union response, is reluctant to accept large numbers of Kosovo Albanians. It has already taken by far the largest numbers of Bosnian refugees, many of whom are still in Germany.

Greece, however, wants the Albanians quickly dispersed, fearing that a large concentration in Macedonia will destabilise the country. Greece says it will accept its share of refugees if others do so also, but is already bracing itself for a large influx of desperate Kosovans making their way to the Greek border. Turkey announced that some 4,000 Kosovans had arrived in the past week, adding to at least 3,000 already there. Many are of Turkish origin, and Turkey estimates that a further 70,000 ethnic Turks live in Kosovo. Turkey's Red Crescent organisation has sent seven lorriesloads of food, tents and blankets to Macedonia and Albania.

Egypt promised aid and much of the Arab world is also expected to pay for relief for fellow Muslims. The EU yesterday released \$10.7 million for emergency aid and Washington announced a grant of \$8.5 million to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

□ Gioia del Colle: An Italian Navy ship unloaded tents and buses at the Albanian port of Durres yesterday in an effort to prevent an illegal influx of refugees into Italy (John Phillips writes). Other equipment and teams of doctors were being flown to Albania in the air and sea lift, Operation Rainbow.

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مكتبة من الأصول

White mother hands over her black baby

A WHITE mother of test-tube twins, who gave birth to one white boy and one black after a mix-up at a fertility clinic, has decided to hand the black child to its biological parents.

After years of trying for a baby, Donna Fasano went to a New York clinic where she was implanted with four eggs fertilised by her husband, Richard. But doctors also implanted by accident several eggs belonging to Deborah and Robert Rogers, who had been at the clinic on the same day and are black.

The mistake emerged when tests on the fetuses revealed that Mrs Fasano was not the biological mother of both. She then gave birth to one white child and one black and Mrs Rogers, who had failed to conceive after treatment at Lillian Nash's clinic, sued Dr Nash.

She and her husband also filed a lawsuit seeking custody of the black boy. But with the boys now three months old, the Fasanos decided this week to give Mr and Mrs Rogers the infant they were fighting for and are planning their own negligence action.

"We both want what's in the best interest of the child. We're giving him up because we love him," said Mrs Fasano in a statement that attacked the doctors who implanted the eggs. "This wasn't my doing."

Test-tube mix-up leaves two sets of parents with a son in common, reports Damian Whitworth

People with infertility problems should be able to go to their doctors and trust them to do the right thing. To them, it may be a job; to me, it's my life. She [Dr Nash] may have given me two beautiful babies, but she destroyed their lives."

Ivan Tantleff, a lawyer for the Fasanos, said they were devastated. "The Fasanos have reared, loved and cared for both children as their own. She is doing this because she loves her boys, and she is a victim here, not the culprit. She doesn't look at them as white and black. She looks at them as her sons. She is torn apart."

Mrs Rogers, from New Jersey, who had paid \$1,500 (£950) for the treatment, was said by her lawyer, Rudolph Silas, to have been distraught and seeking counselling, but was delighted when told of the decision by the Fasanos: "She was very excited to hear the

good news and overwhelmed after so many failed efforts to conceive. Delighted, overwhelmed and mostly in tears."

Mr Silas added: "She had approached this at the end of many years trying to conceive. It certainly raises the possibility of a happy ending for all parties. At least happier than it would have been if there had not been two children."

The couples are expected to meet within days and a deal will be worked out that will include visitation rights to allow the two boys, whose names and pictures have not been released, to grow up as brothers.

Dr Nash, 71, declined to comment on the resolution of the case but previously expressed her dismay about the mix-up. "We've tried to do the right thing all along. I've never had anything happen like this before."

"I told both couples about it as soon as I found out."



The Queen Mother with Alex Michael, rider of Carlisle Bandito's, winner of the Royal Artillery Gold Cup at Sandown

Tough guy test with a crucifix is criticised

By RUTH GLEDHILL
RELIGION
CORRESPONDENT

A "TOUGH" guy millennium endurance test in which contestants will have to carry wooden crosses to commemorate the Crucifixion has been condemned as tasteless by the Church of England.

More than 2,000 competitors have already entered next year's competition, to be held near Wolverhampton. Billy Wilson, the organiser, said that Jewish and Muslim competitors would be allowed to carry a tree instead of a cross.

Mr Wilson, a Roman Catholic, added: "We were going to make them all carry a cross but we respect all our competitors. Jesus was the original 'tough guy'."

The Rev Robert Ellis, spokesman for the Lichfield diocese, said: "To paraphrase the late Kenny Everett, this has to be in the worst possible taste."

Target for seeing patients revised

By IAN MURRAY
MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Government set ambitious targets for outpatient clinics yesterday after meeting its pledge on cutting hospital waiting lists two months ahead of schedule.

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, aims to reduce the number queuing for a first appointment to see a specialist since this "waiting list" has grown to 220,000 and is in turn becoming an embarrassment.

He has promised that more than a third of a million more new outpatients will be seen next year over and above the record 11 million who will be seen this year.

Doctors' leaders immediately told him that was a promise too far. "The continual rise in work load is unsustainable," Peter Hawker, chairman of the British Medical Association's consultants' committee, said. The new promise could be delivered only if there was an immediate expansion in consultant numbers, he said.

The patient figures for February showed the list was cut by 39,700 from January, to 1,19,700, the lowest since December 1996.

www.doh.gov.uk/patients/consultants.htm
Information on waiting list link
www.doh.gov.uk/consultants.htm
Site for complaints to NHS

Anti-drugs chief backs 'medicinal' cannabis

By RICHARD FORD
HOME CORRESPONDENT

THE medical use of cannabis won the backing of the Government's chief anti-drugs campaigner yesterday.

Keith Hellawell, a former chief police constable, said that doctors should be allowed to prescribe the class B drug to ease pain and suffering, provided the beneficial effects were proved by research.

"There appear to be many qualities within the herb that are likely to have an impact on different suffering," he told the Commons Home Affairs Select Committee.

Mr Hellawell, UK Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator, recently visited a farm where cannabis is being grown for medical research under a special licence issued by the Home Office. Five thousand plants have been sown in a secure glasshouse in southern England.

The Government allowed the trial because of increasing evidence that cannabis could be useful as a painkiller and in treating illnesses such as multiple sclerosis and epilepsy.

Mr Hellawell also told the MPs that the popularity of cannabis was declining among 15 to 25 year olds because of its widespread use, and that smoking heroin was frequently the first choice of drug for young people. "They think they are not being rebellious or radical if they are taking cannabis," he said.

Writers protest at library closures

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

THE writers Alan Bennett, Martin Amis and Ben Elton, the actress Sadie Frost and the comedian Harry Enfield are among celebrities challenging the closure of libraries in a North London borough.

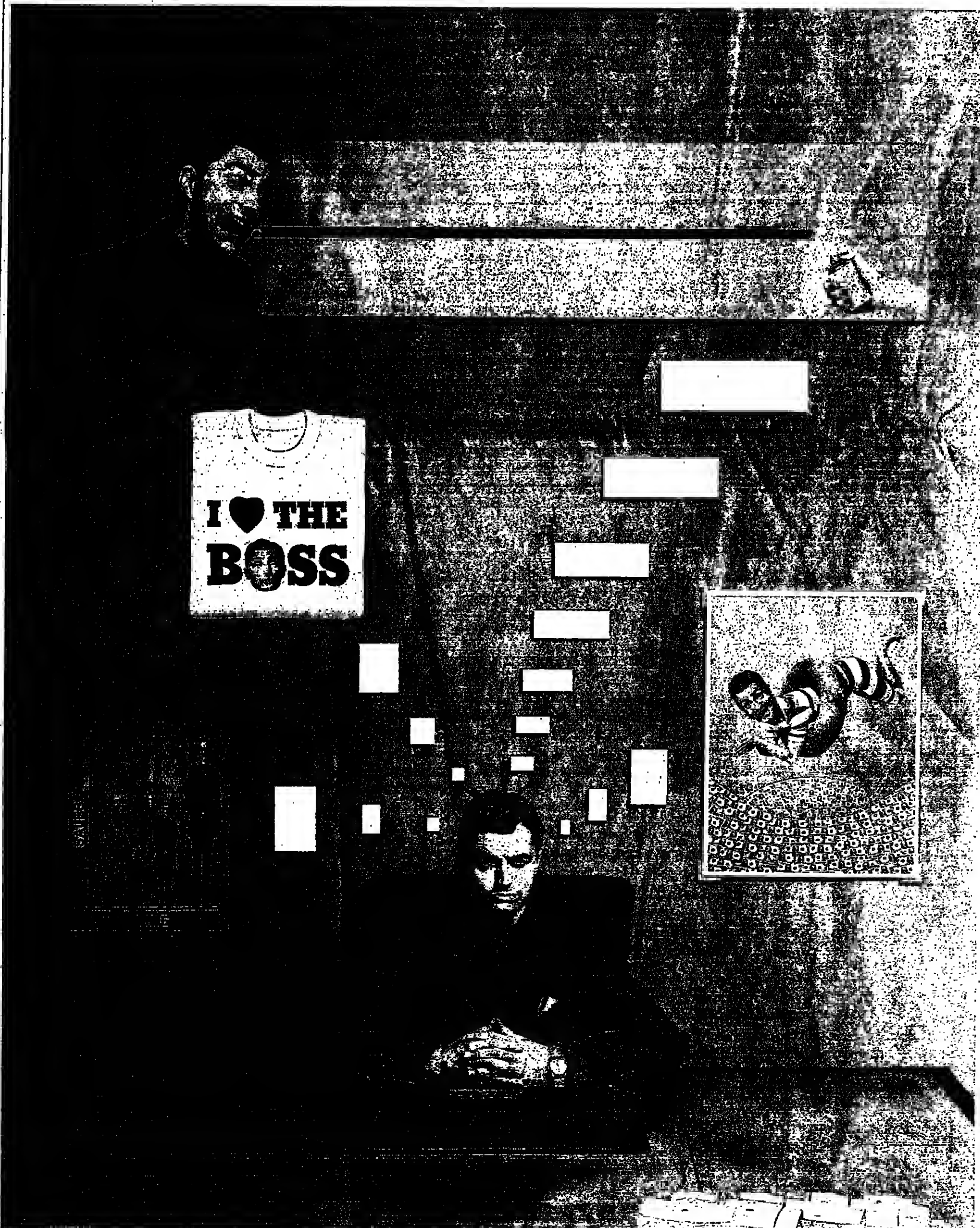
In what could be a test case — alerting councils across the country to pause before closing libraries — legal action is being taken to stop Camden council shutting five libraries over the next four years.

The campaigners argue that under Section 7 of the 1964 Public Libraries and Muse-

ums Act, a local authority has a statutory duty to provide efficient and comprehensive library services.

Tom Selwyn, for the group, said the campaigners would present a formal complaint to Chris Smith, the Culture Minister, tomorrow. "We think there are grounds for the Secretary of State to look at what Camden has decided to do."

Camden has earmarked three libraries to close this year, with large ones at Holborn and St Pancras closing within the next four years.



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No jokes please, we're trying to enjoy the cruise

By ROBIN YOUNG

YOU wonder what happened to stand-up comedians and end-of-pier shows? Well, they went to sea on cruise ships, and now they are being scuttled.

Thomson Travel Group announced yesterday that it is dropping no fewer than 76 British comedy acts, casting them adrift from its 1999 summer cruise programme, because, the company says, a survey showed that holidaymakers put comics bottom of their list of entertainment preferences.

The oldest cruise joke of all, for those who need to be reminded, goes: "My wife's on a cruise to the West Indies." "Jamaica?" "No, she went of her own accord." It started life as soon as P&O invented the concept of cruising. Nowadays, as audiences might expect, cruise

jokes are closer to the bone. The comedians who find themselves so uncere-

ly unshipped for questionable quipping are indignant at the treatment they have received. Yesterday one, who declined to be named in case he never worked again, said: "Some of the biggest names in nightclub comedy have been axed. I am astounded. I can't believe they are using a questionnaire to judge comedians. It just doesn't work like that."

"This is just a get-out. They have been putting on young alternative comics, which the older age groups just don't find funny.

"Last year I had a fantastic season — the audience loved me. I got standing ovations. When people go on holiday they want to be made to laugh. I am sure when people who go back to cruises year after year realise there are no comedians on the bill, they will complain."

Thomson Cruises said yesterday: "This isn't meant to be funny. We constantly monitor the customers' reactions and suggestions about entertainment. As a result of very recent monitoring, we have shifted the balance in terms of comics and comedians. The custom-

Tour operators such as Thomson are accustomed to accusations that they have vulgarised one of the oldest and stateliest of diversions for the wealthy, popularising cruises by pumping up the numbers and bringing down the prices.

Yesterday it was its upmarket rival, P&O, which boasted that it would be floating no fewer than three cruises entirely devoted to comedy, hosted by Mike Craig and starring

such names as Paul Daniels, Kathy Staff from *Last of the Summer Wine*, and Phil Cool. "Every cruise will have a comedian aboard," P&O pledged. "Comics are a much-loved part of shipboard cabaret. It would be madness to push them overboard."

Yet Thomson is adamant. "We feel we should react quickly to customers' requests," a spokesman said. "They spend a lot of money on their holidays and we want to make

days and we want to make them happy. But out of 1,500 nights of entertainment, we are only talking about 76 acts, which is a very small percentage. We are very sorry that part of the entertainment crew will not be joining us, and we will do our best to find them jobs elsewhere in the Thomson range, for example in hotels." Hotel guests, you have been

warned.



Eric Morecambe's widow, Joan, left, with Doreen Wise at the funeral in Slough yesterday of Mrs Wise's husband, Ernie

**Laughter
to the end
for Ernie
Wise**

By JOANNA BALE

LAUGHTER and tears were the order of service as showbusiness friends, family and fans said farewell to Eric Wise at a private funeral yesterday. Michael Grade, who gave the tribute at Slough Crematorium, echoed Eric Morecambe's favourite characterisation of Wise, who died ten days ago aged 73, when he said: "Nobody who did not enjoy the privilege of working closely with Morecambe and Wise can possibly understand the importance of the one to the other. Wise without Morecambe, Morecambe without Wise? Unthinkable. Like trying to create a table without legs, short, fat and hairy - no!" The mourners were the comedians' widows, Angela Rippon, Frank Bough, Frankie Vaughan, Rolf Harris and Tom O'Connor.

CARRY ON CRUISING

Some shipboard couples' jokes:
 [] I won't say the audience on the last cruise were old, but they held the captain's farewell party on the first night, just in case.
 [] I've got the smallest cabin. It's so far below they call it the Captain's Condo.
 [] I'm so small that when I turn the key in the lock, I break the window.
 [] As for the complimentary, (I've known him since he was just a little comma.
 [] I tell you, if it wasn't for the Valium on this cruise, I'd be on drugs. I did go to see the ship's doctor any way. He said: "You're crazy." "Crazy?" I said. "I went a second opinion." "OK," he said. "You're only too."

Paris store offers virtual shopping on rollerskates

FROM SUSAN BELL IN PARIS

ROLLERSKATING assistants will soon be helping shoppers around the world to browse through the latest fashions in a Paris department store using an interactive website.

The futuristic uniforms of the cyber-salesforce are a far cry from the black suit, pearls and haughty expression traditionally worn by Paris shop assistants. Dubbed *webcamers*, the skating-sales assistants are being introduced by Printemps to allow customers sitting at their computer screens to see and select from the store's stock of one and a half million items.

The webcamers are equipped with mobile telephones and mini-cameras strapped to their wrists. These will be linked to the Internet when the service is launched next week. In their free hands, the assistants carry a portable computer so that they can communicate directly with the client.

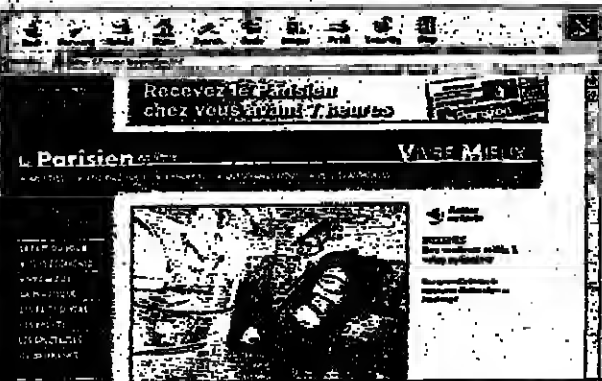
A customer looking for the latest Dior accessory will be able to log on to the Printemps website and re-

quest the services of a **webcamer**. The assistant will skate over to the appropriate department, allowing the customer to see the store's entire range of handbags live on screen while "talking" to him or her by typing messages on the computer. The **webcamer** will be able to offer advice while guiding the customer around the shop. The customer can then select and pay for the item over the Internet.

The interactive concept, which allows the customer to take a virtual stroll through the shop without leaving home, should prove a big improvement on the popular practice of mail order shopping over the Internet.

Four webcamers will operate in the store at first, but Printemps said that, if the programme proved a success, it would recruit more rollerskating assistants. In the meantime, *cybernocturnes* will also be available to allow customers to do a spot of virtual shopping on evenings when the store is closed.

☐ Website: www.primetemps.fr



Ready for shopping action: a webcamer at Printemps

Frailty drove friend of Prince to suicide

By HELEN JOHNSTONE

A FORMER joint master of the Quorn hunt, whose friends included the Prince of the Wales, killed herself after failing health meant that she lost her independence.

An inquest yesterday was told that Ulrica Murray Smith, 87, was found with a plastic bag tied over her head by a carer at her home in Gaddesby, Leicestershire. She had died of suffocation.

Marguerite Leigh-Bolter, a friend, told the inquest in Loughborough that the former

showjumper was fiercely independent. She had become depressed after realizing that she was too frail to take her annual cruise. "She wanted to die because she didn't want to be a burden to her family or the carers," Mrs Leigh-Botter said.

Mrs Murray Smith was the granddaughter of Lady Ulrica Seymour, the daughter of the 12th Duke of Somerset. The Prince wrote the foreword to her book, *The Magic of the Quorn*, published in 1980.

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Ulster peace deal 'on a knife edge'

Unionists deny reports of a deal on disarmament, write Martin Fletcher and Audrey Magee

TONY BLAIR and Northern Ireland's political leaders were locked in talks to save the Good Friday peace accord last night. Officials said the outcome rested "on a knife edge".

The Prime Minister's spokesman said it was premature to talk of either breakthrough or failure, but acknowledged that time was running out. Mr Blair was prepared to stay overnight, but had to be back in the House of Commons for Prime Minister's Questions this afternoon.

Mr Mowlem, the Northern Ireland Secretary, is threatening to force the issue to a head by triggering the mechanism for establishing the executive, but there were doubts about whether she would dare to take a step that could prompt David Trimble's resignation as First Minister.

The Ulster Unionist Party emphatically denied reports of an emerging deal under which Mr Trimble would agree to form an executive containing Sinn Féin provided he had cast-iron guarantees that the IRA would begin disarming shortly afterwards.

"There is no question of the UUP agreeing to an executive involving Sinn Féin until there is some prior de-commissioning," John Taylor, the UUP's deputy leader, said. Another UUP official said: "We would be torn apart by the dissenters if we don't get de-commissioning."

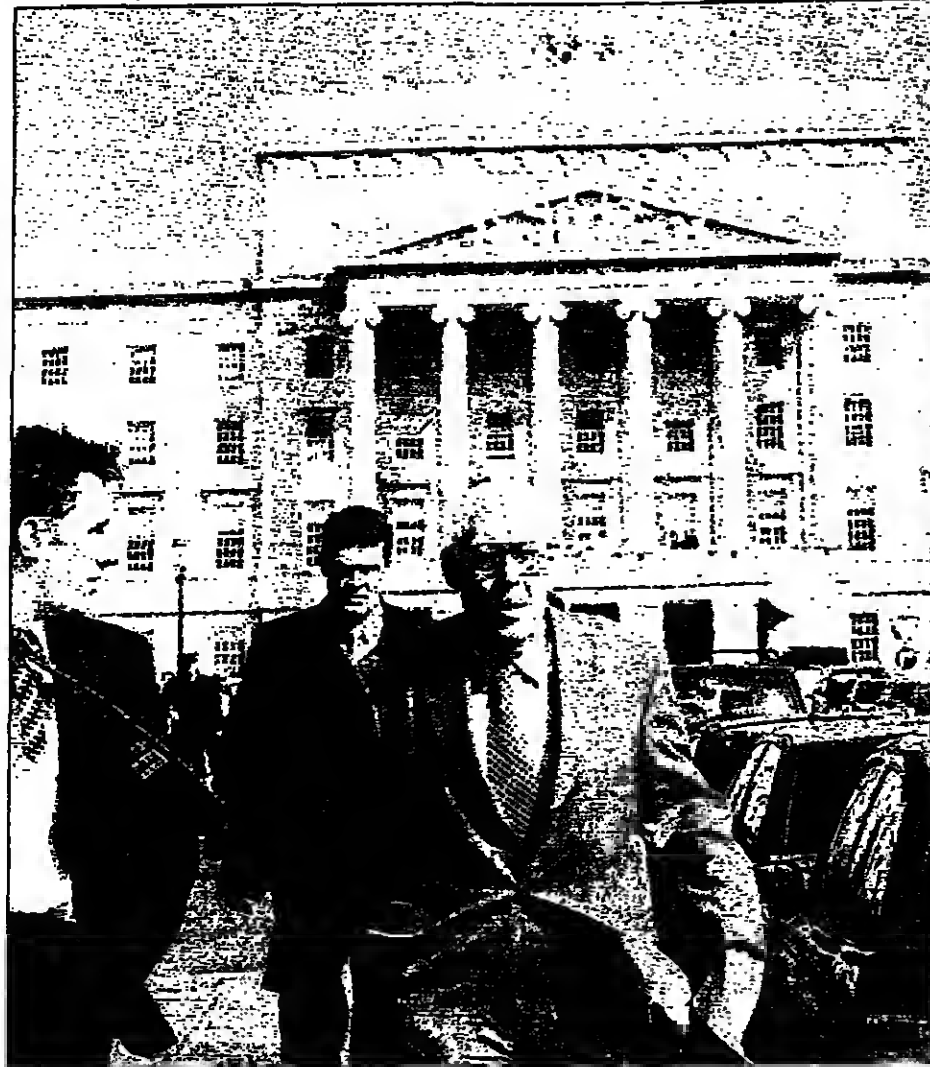
It was equally unclear what

would happen in the absence of a deal. Mr Trimble could seek a government review of the accord, arguing that the republicans had violated it by refusing to disarm. Dr Mowlem might follow through on her threat to trigger the mechanism. Whatever happened, the scope for compromise would be greatly reduced by the start of the marching season on Easter Monday and the approaching European elections.

Mr Blair began the day by saying that a breakthrough was possible only if the Province's leaders showed "extraordinary courage and vision and leadership". Mr Trimble risks being toppled by his party if he establishes an executive without prior disarmament, and Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin's president, insists he cannot deliver IRA de-commissioning.

Mr Blair and Bertie Aherne, the Irish Prime Minister, met the smaller parties at Stormont in the morning, and the main players, including the UUP, Sinn Féin, the Social Democratic and Labour Party and General John de Chastelain, head of the international disarmament body, at Hillsborough Castle in the afternoon and evening. General de Chastelain would play a key role in verifying any de-commissioning.

The two Prime Ministers also met the Orange Order and leaders of Portadown's nationalist Garvaghy Road residents, suggesting that they



Ian Paisley quits Stormont, left, in protest at republicans who climbed on Lord Carson's statue, and were later driven away by police, bottom right.

were also looking for a deal that would resolve the dispute over the Orangemen's annual Drumcree parade.

The Province's Roman Catholic bishops urged their followers to pray for success, saying the alternative was unthinkable, but the atmosphere was not helped by a loyalist bomb

thrown at a Sinn Féin councillor's house in Co Antrim. Mr Blair was heckled by an anti-accord Unionist assemblyman, and a group called Fam-



lies Acting for Innocent Relatives, who accused him of appeasing terrorists and ignoring their victims. Two Sinn Féin protesters enraged Ian Paisley and his Democratic Unionist Party by flying an Irish tricolour from the statue of Lord Carson, the father of Unionism, at Stormont.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hospital malaria kills man

A man aged 22 who went into Nottingham City Hospital with a chest infection died after contracting malaria during his stay. Two other patients in the same ward were also infected. Health authorities said the three patients may have been infected by contaminated blood.

Gavin Sebborn, from New Basford, Nottingham, died after contracting cerebral malaria. A spokesman for the hospital said that the two other infected patients, a 91-year-old woman and a middle-aged man, were responding well to treatment. An urgent investigation has been opened into the outbreak. An inquiry on Mr Sebborn was opened and adjourned yesterday.

Resign call

Alice Mahon, Labour MP for Halifax, tabled a motion demanding that Chris Woodhead, Chief Inspector of Schools, resign. She said she was convinced he had not told the truth over claims that he once had an affair with a sixth-former.

Drug verdict

A former record producer was found guilty of "dependence on drugs" at the inquest into the death of the Marquis of Bristol. Bill Walrond, said at Bury St Edmunds that Lord Bristol was "as desecrating of sympathy as of conscience".

Ecstasy ruling

The nephew of the architect Lord Rogers of Riverside was jailed for two years for possessing Ecstasy with intent to supply. Aylesbury Crown Court was told that Mark Rogers, 25, had 194 tablets hidden in his underwear.

Sacking cash

Staff who are unfairly dismissed for blowing the whistle on illegal practices or over health and safety issues will be entitled to unlimited compensation, Stephen Byers, the Trade and Industry Secretary, announced.

Smoky spice

The former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell has been criticised after being pictured with a cigarette during a break from filming. The anti-smoking group ASH said: "It can undo all the good that health education messages can do."

Teachers threaten to block pay plan

By JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

A MODERATE teaching union threatened industrial action yesterday to derail the Government's plans for performance-related pay, despite a plea from David Blunkett to work with him on the scheme.

The Education and Employment Secretary rejected a demand from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers to delay implementation of the £1 billion package of reforms next year. He said the Treasury had already allocated the money, and teachers would miss out if it did not go ahead.

Mr Blunkett told the association's annual conference in Harrogate that the principle of performance-related pay was not negotiable, but he promised discussion on its delivery. "We are trying to do something that we haven't done in the teaching profession before, but which is taken for granted elsewhere: that you are rewarded for good performance."

However, the first of three attempts during the Easter holiday to win over teaching unions brought a rebuff for Mr Blunkett. In a rare show of militancy, delegates voted almost unanimously to support a motion giving the executive the power to call a ballot on industrial action.

Peter Smith, the association's general secretary, said action could centre on a boycott of the annual appraisal that the Government has suggested as the basis for bonus payments to exceptional teachers. "That would be a pity because there are other elements of the Government's proposals for which there could be a consensus," he said.

LINKS
at.org.uk/assembly/assembly.html
Conference website, details of motions and debates

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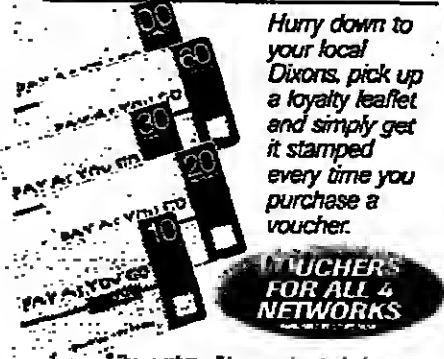
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مكتبة الزهر

Male myths are women's main sporting hurdle

By IAN MURRAY
MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

LINFORD CHRISTIE and Florence Griffith-Joyner could have been side by side in the Olympic starting blocks if women had not been brainwashed by 19th-century medical myths, a new study says.

Hormone research this century is also blamed for making women believe that they are frail and physically inferior to men. Despite great advances, they will never compete on a level playing field in most sports because of the prejudice, the report claims.

"If we could turn the clock back 120 years and these myths did not exist, then men and women today would be competing at comparable levels," says the author of the study, Ellis Cashmore, Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences at Staffordshire University.

For proof of women's potential, he points to the fact that their world record for the marathon has improved by an average of 2 minutes 47 seconds a year since 1964, when the record for women was first officially kept. Men have improved their record time by an average of 66 seconds a year.

"For the sake of television, women are started in marathons half an hour before the men, so they still do not compete side by side," he says. "If

MARATHON TIMES

	Women	Men
1908		2:55:18
1909		2:40:34
1913		2:36:06
1920		2:32:25
1926		2:28:01
1928	3:40:22	
1932		2:28:42
1936		2:20:42
1960		2:17:39
1964	3:37:07	2:14:28
1968	3:19:33	2:12:11
1972		2:12:00
1976	3:15:22	2:09:36
1980		2:08:33
1984	3:02:53	
1988		2:08:40
1992		2:07:12
1996	2:22:43	2:06:50
1998	2:20:47	2:06:05

they were allowed to do so, then I estimate that, by about 2020, women would be finishing in the same sort of time as the men."

Tennis champions such as Martina Hingis are as good as John Newcombe and Stan Smith at their prime, he says. But mixed doubles do not create the competition required to make women achieve the level of men, because "it is a jocular kind of event that lacks the bitterness necessary for maximum performance".

Professor Cashmore says that women have proved they are the equal of men in equestrianism, where they compete alongside one another, but it was probably assumed that this was because the physical exertion was by the horse, not the rider. Writing in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, he says that male anatomists in the 19th century sought to prove female inferiority by drawing attention to differences between the organs, functions and feelings of the sexes.

In the 1920s and 1930s, endocrinology created a new understanding of sexual differences based on hormones. "So perfectly did these myths suit more general beliefs about women, their position in the sexual division of labour and their domestic duties, that they were eagerly accepted as fact by a British society enmeshed in patriarchy."

"Women's progress in sport has been retarded not by their own physiological frailty or bodily differences, but by myths about their physical capabilities," he writes.

In the past, women were warned against sport and exercise. Some opponents suggested that the enfeebling effects of menstruation could be offset by deep breathing and mild exercise, like throwing bean bags. Others prescribed rest.

"While these may sound like old wives' tales, they had the status of scientific fact in the period when organised sports were coming into being. Sports were intended for men only," he says.

Women feared that exercise would make them incapable of having children, grow facial hair or lose their breasts. Sportswomen were regarded as odd and believed to lack femininity or to represent moral degeneracy.

"Against this background, the question is not why women lag so far behind men, but how they have managed to make up so much ground so quickly," Professor Cashmore writes.



Conchita Martínez her ranking was not high enough to justify a £340,000 bonus

Judges play tennis star off the court

By CHRISTINE MIDDAP

THE former Wimbledon champion Conchita Martínez has been denied a £340,000 bonus after three London judges ruled yesterday that she was not ranked high enough on the professional women's circuit.

Martínez, 26, who won Wimbledon five years ago, argued that she was entitled to the bonus in addition to her £1.2 million contract fee.

Under the contract with the Italian sportswear company Ellesse International, the Spanish tennis star was entitled to the bonus if she finished the year in the top 10. But the three Court of Appeal judges ruled that, although she finished 1996 with an average ranking of 2.50, she was still behind Steffi Graf, with an average of 1.6, and Monica Seles, 1.16.

Lord Justice Clarke, a tennis fan, said: "There were two players who were well ahead of the others and who, for almost the whole year, shared the No 1 ranking. On that footing it seems to me to offend common sense to hold that the next ranked player could fairly be described as the No 2 in the world."

Martínez, now ranked 18th in the world, rose to prominence in 1994 when she won Wimbledon by defeating Martina Navratilova in the veteran player's last singles performance.

The following year Martínez signed a five-year promotional contract with Ellesse. Her £1.2 million retainer was dependent on her maintaining a world singles professional ranking in the top ten. She was also promised performance-related bonuses — £557,000 if she achieved a No 1 ranking in any one year, and £340,000 if she was ranked No 2. Leave to appeal was refused.

£200 m road link held up

One of the first privately financed motorways, which cost £200 million to build, has been partially closed by subsidence less than two months after it was opened.

The 11-mile M1-A1 link road in West Yorkshire was hailed as a triumph of co-operation between the private and public sectors when it opened two months ahead of schedule. Yorkshire Link receives an undisclosed fee from the Government, based on the numbers of vehicles travelling on the road.

Safety drive

Police officers make fewer private motoring insurance claims than public-sector workers, according to Zurich Municipal. Of 11 professions covered, doctors made the most. Nurses, top last year, were eighth, followed by dentists and social workers.

Salmonella case

Up to £3 million has been claimed in a High Court writ by 630 food poisoning victims. Sunworld has accepted responsibility for holidays in Majorca last year being ruined by a salmonella outbreak, but compensation has not been agreed.

Drug rape fears

Police are investigating a woman's claim that she was injected with the "date rape" drug Rohypnol. A dye was put in the drug last year after attacks on women whose drinks had been spiked. The latest incident occurred in Doncaster.

Ecstasy charge

Alexander Hibbert, 25, a lorry driver, of Watford, was charged with drug trafficking in Dunkirk. French customs officers had earlier discovered almost £10 million of Ecstasy tablets and other drugs aboard a vehicle.

Pole axed

Britain's oldest known telegraph pole is to be taken down, days after its claim to fame was discovered. The pole on Culver Hill, Amberley, Gloucestershire, dates from 1886. It has started to rot and is unsafe.

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Comic draws on Blyton spirit

The storyteller's daughter is fighting sci-fi heroes for young readers, writes Alex O'Connell

THE scantily clad, gun-toting heroes of futuristic comics are about to receive an unlikely challenge. The elder daughter of Enid Blyton, author of wholesome tales for children, is launching a comic-strip magazine that aims to revive the spirit of her mother's books.

Blue Moon, a fortnightly publication for six to ten-year-olds, gives traditional fairytales a 1990s twist. Gillian Baverstock, a former deputy headmistress, said: "I have not deliberately followed the spirit of Enid Blyton, but I have used the basic philosophy my mother believed in very strongly, such as stimulating children's imaginations."

It was also the philosophy, she said, of her co-director, Tim Quinn, former editor of Spider-Man magazine. "All the storytelling plots were devised by Tim Quinn, who was brought up on Enid Blyton's work."

"I began to realise that the beautiful colours and drawings of the old magazines were not really around any more and I thought there was a niche in the market for these illustrations."

Blue Moon will take stories such as Jack and the Beanstalk and Rumpelstiltskin beyond their conventional endings. In the first issue, Jack finds an ice kingdom at the top of his beanstalk. Cinderella is sent flying by her sister Horabella, and



The adventures of the Ninja Turtles will be challenged by the fairytales of Blue Moon, launched by Gillian Baverstock, seen as a girl with her mother

Rumpelstiltskin reveals a weakness for mauve tights.

Mrs Baverstock feels that the old storylines have been enhanced rather than corrupted. "I think a novelist once said there are only seven plots in all the books that have been written. And these characters are so marvellous, why can't we reuse them and recreate them?"

She plans to include verse alongside the comic strips. Future issues will include "classic poems and good modern

poetry". There may also be a letters page.

She met Mr Quinn in 1994 when looking into the possibilities of a new look Enid Blyton magazine, the original version of which she had edited between 1951 and 1958. The idea was dropped, but subsequently Mrs Baverstock became consultant editor of the BBC's Noddy magazine.

"I wanted something for children who were beginning to read, coming out of the Noddy age and moving into



The adventures of the Ninja Turtles will be challenged by the fairytales of Blue Moon, launched by Gillian Baverstock, seen as a girl with her mother

something else. I read in The Times that primary schools were using comics as aids for children who had reading difficulties and I found that particularly interesting."

The partners set up Quill Publications, a joint investment run partly from Mrs Baverstock's home in Ilkley, West Yorkshire, and partly from Mr Quinn's house in Shrewsbury.

It will cost £70,000 to launch the first issue, but they hope that the £1.25 magazine



The adventures of the Ninja Turtles will be challenged by the fairytales of Blue Moon, launched by Gillian Baverstock, seen as a girl with her mother

will pay for itself within four issues.

The children in the opening story, The Amazing Computer, are a far cry from the science-fiction faces and jaggedly drawn bodies of the Japanese manga comics that have become classroom currency.

Gwen has well-brushed, straight blonde locks, freckles and sensible shoes, while her brother Arthur wears a pressed shirt under his anorak. But there are hints of childish anarchy.

Gwen wears a yellow smiley face, associated with the 1980s acid house music scene, sewn into the denim bib of her dungarees.

Gwen and Arthur share the Famous Five's ingenuity and talent for finding mysteries, as the story shows. "They were on their way to Computers! Computers! Computers! when Gwen, Arthur and their dog Henry heard strange piping music coming from an old alley they were passing."

Essential textbooks missing from the classroom

By HANNAH BETTS

UP TO half of all GCSE students have no access in the classroom to books covering core subjects in the national curriculum, research has shown.

A survey by Keele University reveals that, throughout the country, over inadequate state provision of books in secondary school classrooms.

The survey questioned 2,800 pupils, about 500 parents and 150 head teachers and subject heads. Although 82 per cent of head teachers believed that there was a link between textbook

availability and pupil attainment, only a quarter of 13 and 14-year-olds had access to textbooks to help in doing English, history and geography homework.

At the same time, while 95 per cent of head teachers questioned said that they had no specific policy on textbook funding, 80 per cent said that they would welcome spending guidelines.

The research is backed by the School Book Alliance, a coalition of teachers, parents and education specialists that is demanding that the Government provide more books for secondary schools

and spending guidelines for teachers.

Martin Roberts, the head teacher at Cherwell School in Oxford and a member of the alliance, said: "Schools need a radical rethink of how available resources are used. One in six secondary schools spends less than £10 per pupil on textbooks each year. Central guidance on what should be spent would make a good first step.

Students who have the books

they need in class make better students — in terms of focus, understanding, level of interest and results."

The educational charity the Book Trust has established recommended figures of between £64 and £96 to be spent on national curriculum textbooks per pupil per year, depending on the student's age.

Jeff Holman, of the alliance, said: "Our aim is at least one textbook per

subject per pupil and we urge the Government to ensure that schools are funded to a level that allows them to meet this goal."

The Times Free Books for Schools scheme, which was praised by Keele University, includes several secondary textbooks in the list of free titles. For more details call the helpline on 0845 6040312.



The adventures of the Ninja Turtles will be challenged by the fairytales of Blue Moon, launched by Gillian Baverstock, seen as a girl with her mother

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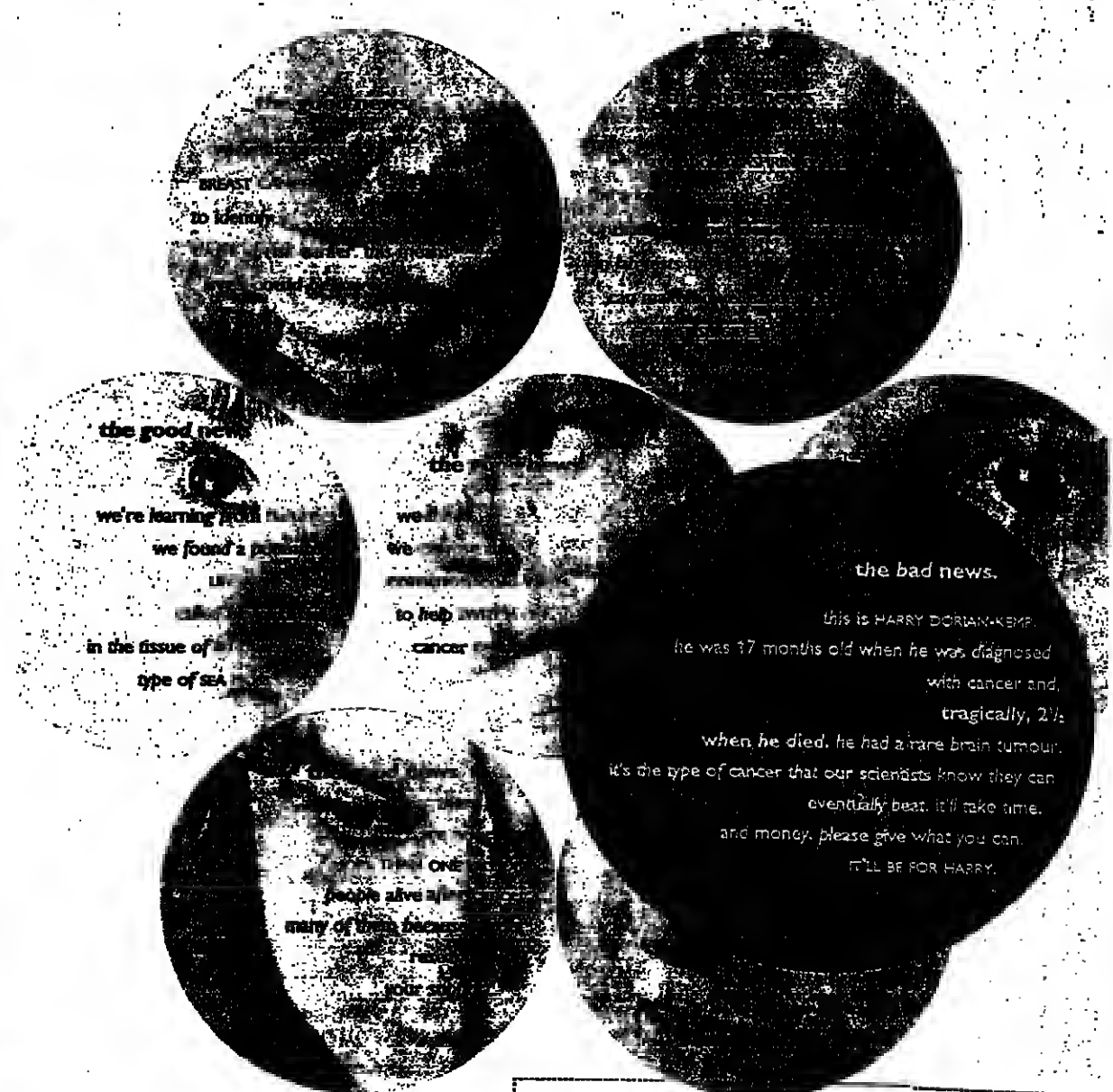
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British firms oppose euro, says survey

ALMOST two thirds of business leaders would oppose Britain joining the single European currency if asked in a referendum today, according to an ICM opinion poll.

The survey showed that 63 per cent of 1,013 managing directors and chief executives polled would vote on behalf of their firms to keep the pound. Only 32 per cent would vote to adopt the euro.

But the poll, commissioned by Business for Sterling, the anti-euro pressure group, also reaffirmed that larger companies with substantial trade commitments in Europe tended to favour membership of the euro. However, the overall findings of the poll, published yesterday, mark a setback for the Government's campaign to persuade businessmen of the benefits of the euro.

Respondents were questioned after the Government launched its National Change-

Poll mocks claim of business support, writes James Landale

over Plan in February to encourage businesses to prepare for potential membership of the euro. The poll also marks the latest stage in the increasingly fierce battle between pro and anti-euro lobby groups to claim business support for their cause.

Business for Sterling said that the poll disproved claims by the Confederation of British Industry that most business people favoured the euro.

The 17-question poll is one of the more comprehensive of recent surveys on public attitudes to the euro. But it clearly contains questionable asser-

tions. For example, the businessmen were told that Britain would lose control of employment law under the euro. Not surprisingly, 58 per cent said it would be a "big drawback".

ICM polled a weighted sample of senior businessmen to reflect British business across the board. Of those employing up to four people 65 per cent opposed the euro. But those with more than 250 staff were almost evenly divided, with 50 per cent in favour of the euro and 47 per cent against.

Some 58 per cent of firms which traded "a lot" in Europe supported Britain adopting the euro, while most of those which did "hardly any" trade on the Continent opposed joining the single currency.

John Redwood, the Shadow Trade Secretary, said: "This has knocked a big hole in the pro-euro cause. They have always said that we must go in because business wants it."



Jiang Zemin, the Chinese President, visiting Salzburg in Austria yesterday, tries out the piano that belonged to Mozart in the house where the composer was born.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Mexican 'killed more than 100'

Cuernavaca, Mexico: Dozens of police cars protected a man suspected of killing more than 100 people as he was transferred to a state prison after crowds called for his blood. The case has split the residents of this southern Mexico city over the issue of the death penalty. Mexico does not have it, but victims' families are demanding it.

José Leonardo Castillo Pombo, the prosecutor, said Fernando Hernández Leyva is a suspect in kidnappings, robberies and as many as 135 killings in five southern Mexican states. The accused was said to have confessed to "over 100 murders" in his pre-trial statements and was led to prison wearing a bulletproof vest. (AP)

Migrant Chinese held

Hong Kong: Immigration officials here detained 132 mainland Chinese whose visas have expired after a court ruled that they can be deported even though their parentage may qualify them for permanent residence in Hong Kong. The court decision came in a case brought by 17 would-be immigrants who are seeking to confirm a ruling by Hong Kong's highest court that anyone with at least one Hong Kong parent has the right to live in the territory. (AP)

Kenya bans toxic fish

Nairobi: The Kenyan Government has ordered an immediate halt to the sale of fish and fish products from Lake Victoria because of poisoning, the Medical Services director, Julius Meme, announced. The statement blamed fishermen who resort to poisonous chemicals as a method of catching fish quickly. Eating the fish may cause diarrhoea, vomiting, excessive sweating, salivation, pneumonia-like symptoms and even death, the statement said. (AFP)

Hutu extradition plea

Arusha, Tanzania: Rwanda and Belgium have lodged extradition requests for Bernard Ntuyahaga, 47, right, a Hutu suspected of involvement in the killing of Agathe Uwilingiyimana, the Rwandan Prime Minister, and ten Belgian peacekeepers during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. He was arrested in Tanzania on charges of entering the country illegally. (AP)



Mercenaries triumph

Brisbane: Papua New Guinea has lost a legal bid to overturn an order that it pay London-based Sandline International more than £11 million for its part in providing military training and equipment to help put down an insurrection on Bougainville Island. The Government is expected to appeal against the decision. Sandline has been seeking orders to freeze Papua New Guinea bank accounts and assets in Europe to enforce the ruling. (AP)

Smallest Net phone

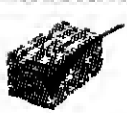
Seoul: A South Korean firm unveiled what it claimed was the world's smallest Internet cellular phone, able to access and display information from the Net. The "smart phone", made by Samsung Electronics, weighs 5.5oz and has a 1.1in by 2.7in touch-screen panel capable of sending text messages and pictures. "This is the world's smallest and lightest phone using CDMA (code division multiple access) technology," Jeung Soon Hyo, a Samsung engineer, said. (Reuters)

Sayonara, 007

Los Angeles: Sony gave up its fight to make a James Bond film under terms of an out-of-court settlement with long-time 007 studio, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, both sides reported. MGM has a nineteenth Bond film, starring Pierce Brosnan, in the making for a November release. The dispute hinged on rights controlled by Kevin McClory, a writer and producer who produced the Bond films, *Thunderball* in 1965 and *Never Say Never Again* in 1983. (AP)

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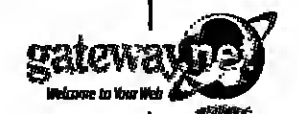
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Should you cut up your cards?



Personal Finance Editor Anne Ashworth looks at the high charges of credit and charge cards; how much you could save if you controlled your Imelda Marcos-type shoe urges; why you should hold fire on Isas

More than nine million people carry a Barclaycard. Why they do so is one of the great mysteries of our age.

The popularity of the card defies explanation. This is not a flexible friend that makes the owner more stylish. Although fashionably blue, like the limited-edition Alexander McQueen American Express card sported by Kate Moss and other chums of the couturier, Barclaycard does not have quite the same cachet.

This 33-year-old credit card's secure grasp on our wallets becomes even more curious when one examines its cost. Barclaycard customers appear happy to contribute royally to the £7 million remuneration package enjoyed by Michael O'Neill, the new Barclays chief executive.

Barclaycard's standard Annual Percentage Rate (APR) is 20.9 per cent. This is close to four times the current base rate of 5.50 per cent and three times the introductory rates payable on some of the low-rate cards now available. Barclaycard also carries a £10 annual fee, waived only if you spend more than £5,000 in a year.

The APR gives an indication of the true cost of any borrowing, whether on a credit card, a personal loan or an overdraft. Those Barclaycard holders who spend more than the average can take advantage of slightly lower, but scarcely giveaway, rates. If you spend more than £500 in a month, for example, a rate of 16.9 per cent applies to that debt.

As Barclaycard is the King Kong of UK cards, its rates attract the most attention. But the other big banks are no more squeamish about squeezing the customer. Lloyds Bank MasterCard, for example, also has a standard rate of 20.9 per cent. A balance of more than £1,000 is charged at 19.9 per cent, a balance of more than £2,000 at 16.4 per cent. The £10 fee is waived if you spend more than £1,000 a year.

These rates explain why one disaffected holder suggested that Barclaycard's latest "Don't Put It Off, Put It On" campaign should be renamed

"Don't Put It On, Cut It Up". He had just learnt how much he could save if he switched to one of the new cards. Carrying a debt of £1,000 over six months with Barclaycard means an interest bill of more than £90. At RBS Advanta, a card division of the Royal Bank of Scotland, the bill would be about £34. Perhaps Barclaycard should have retained Rowan Atkinson as the frontman for its advertising. In his role as the inept Latham from the FO, Atkinson successfully distracted attention from these sorts of figures.

In a market where competition has created greater consumer choice, inertia and anxiety are the main reasons why Barclaycard and the rest of its expensive posse continue to hold sway. Cardholders may be aware that they are paying too much, but balk at the form-filling necessary to apply for a cheaper card. There is also the dread of being rejected by another company and surviving without a credit card.

For those in jobs with reasonable salaries on which they cannot quite manage, these fears of being turned down are almost groundless. The new, mostly American-owned card companies eager to attract our custom are interested in those who are creditworthy but freespending. Goody-two-shoes who pay in full each month do not boost profits.

So keen are these upstart companies to win holders that they will accept applicants who wish to transfer debts from their old cards. The new card company repays the amount owed on behalf of the customer and allows him or her to clear the balance at a lower rate.

In the spirit of some financial spring-cleaning, you may now be contemplating giving your cards the snip. But unless you are experiencing severe repayment problems, this is too drastic a step. The right credit card, used properly, is a great modern convenience, giving as much as 56 days' free credit. Overdrafts, with their well-concealed extras, can easily be more expensive, particularly if you go into the red without the



Do you pay enough attention to the cost of your credit cards? Barclaycard's advertisement with Rowan Atkinson successfully distracts attention from the high charges

permission of your bank. Personal loans can be inflexible and may impose penalties if you repay the money early. Worst of all can be running amok in the retail park with a store card, as their rates, sometimes close to 30 per cent, make those on credit cards seem almost modest. While John Lewis's rate is a restrained 18 per cent, Marks & Spencer's cardholders pay 25.4 per cent if they settle their bills by direct debit, or 26 per cent if they pay by cheque. The rate falls to 21.5 per cent for those who owe more than £1,000. The Debenhams card has a rate of 29 per cent (direct debit) or 31 per cent for every other sale.

Some self-analysis should allow you to establish which card suits your circumstances. But, whatever your needs, you should be looking for a card that allows the maximum free borrowing, unencumbered by loyalty schemes which are worthwhile only if you spend significant amounts.

The well-organised 50 per cent of the card-carrying public who pay their balances in full each month need cards without annual fees. The rate of interest is immaterial. Those who use their cards plentifully may be attracted by a card that offers a cashback of a percentage of purchases. Alliance & Leicester's Moneyback card has an APR of 17.4 per cent and returns 0.5 per cent of all purchases up to £3,000 and 1 per cent thereafter. Double points are on offer if you patronise BP, Currys, Interflora,

Ticketmaster and a number of other retailers. If you need a credit limit of £3,000 plus, apply for the A&L's Gold Moneyback card.

Those who, despite their best intentions, repay the minimum each month need to swap to a card with a low introductory rate, taking the option to transfer debts. The discounted introductory rate will apply for a set period, usually six months. The rate is then increased. But by this time many customers have already surfered to another new card to benefit from a further discount. People's Bank of Connecticut charges 6.9 per cent until November 1999, when the rate rises to 17.9 per cent. The RBS Advanta rate of 6.9 per cent applies until January 2000, rising to 17.9 per cent on that date. Those with no taste for the paperwork involved in surging should consider a card with a low flat rate. Capital One, another US-owned company, has a flat rate of 11.9 per cent which will not be increased by a set deadline. The savings to be made by switching are not effortless. Some discipline is required because there may be fees for the late payment of bills or if you exceed your credit limit.

CONTACTS: Times-Money website: www.times-money.co.uk; Alliance & Leicester: 0800 838333; Capital One: 0800 9525252; People's Bank: 0800 551055; RBS Advanta: 0800 077770; Credit Action (debt counselling service): 0800 591084.

The Isas of March? Wait till May

NEW LABOUR has two wholesome solutions to our reluctance to save. The first of these, the stakeholder pension — outlined in the party's manifesto two years ago — has been slow in appearing. The second, the individual savings account (Isa), breaks cover next Tuesday.

Isas were intended to turn low-income households into models of thrift, sweeping aside jargon, fees and penalties and other such deterrents to saving. Ministers boasted that families would shop for their Isas at supermarkets. But the complex rules of these supposedly simple schemes will prevent many from joining in the fun. Isas will allow savers to keep their cash from the clutches of the taxman, a service previously rendered by Peps and Tessas. You will be allowed to contribute £7,000 in the first year (1999-2000) and £5,000 thereafter. Then it becomes complicated. There are two types of Isa — a maxi and a mini. You must decide which to choose at the start of the year. Under the terms of the latter, you can invest up to £3,000 in stocks and shares, £1,000 in cash (£3,000 in 1999-2000)



and £1,000 in life insurance. Each element of the package can be managed by a separate manager. A maxi allows you to invest the full allowance in shares or in a mixture of cash, shares and life insurance. A maxi-Isa will have only one manager.

The maxi will have the most appeal for those who want to put more than £3,000 into shares. Those who prefer to be in cash will probably opt for the mini. Certain plans will carry the Cat standard, a benchmark indicating that the plan has low charges, easy access and easy Terms and conditions. But this is no guarantee of performance. Isas will be available almost everywhere: banks, including the banking divisions of some, but not all, supermarkets; building societies; fund management companies; and insurance companies. They would all like to sign you up as early as possible. But do not commit yourself yet. By early May it will be easier to assess the merits of all schemes.

SUSAN EMMETT

IF YOU are not like her, you will know someone who is. One of those Imelda Marcos types who just cannot let a month go by without investing in a new pair of kitten-heeled mules, Nike trainers or knee-length leather boots, depending on personal style and the season. The kind of girl who is unable to walk from one end of the high street to the other without charging her credit card in at least one shoe shop.

Shoe addiction is common and costly. Even if you are not truly extravagant, even if you can resist the wares of Stephanie Kildan and Jimmy Choo, the pair-a-month shoe fetishist can spend as much as £900 a year at high street stores such as L. K. Bennett, Hobbs or Pled a Terre.

If you cut down your shoe purchases to a more reasonable four pairs a year (a couple for winter, a couple for summer — it isn't that difficult, you can always wear a couple of pairs for two seasons running), you could save about £600 a year. If you move away from the trendiest high street stores and buy slightly cheaper footwear from stockists such as Next, you could save a further £90 a year, a total of £690.

You won't be so well-heeled, but you will be able to treat yourself and a friend to a midweek break at Henlow Grange Health Farm in Bedfordshire, complete with massage and seaweed bath (£520 for two nights), or splash out on a Louis Vuitton shoulder bag with CD holder (£500) and still have almost enough cash left over to buy a pashmina from Pickett (£195).



Kicking the habit: Marcos-like excess can be conquered

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PAULA HAWKINS

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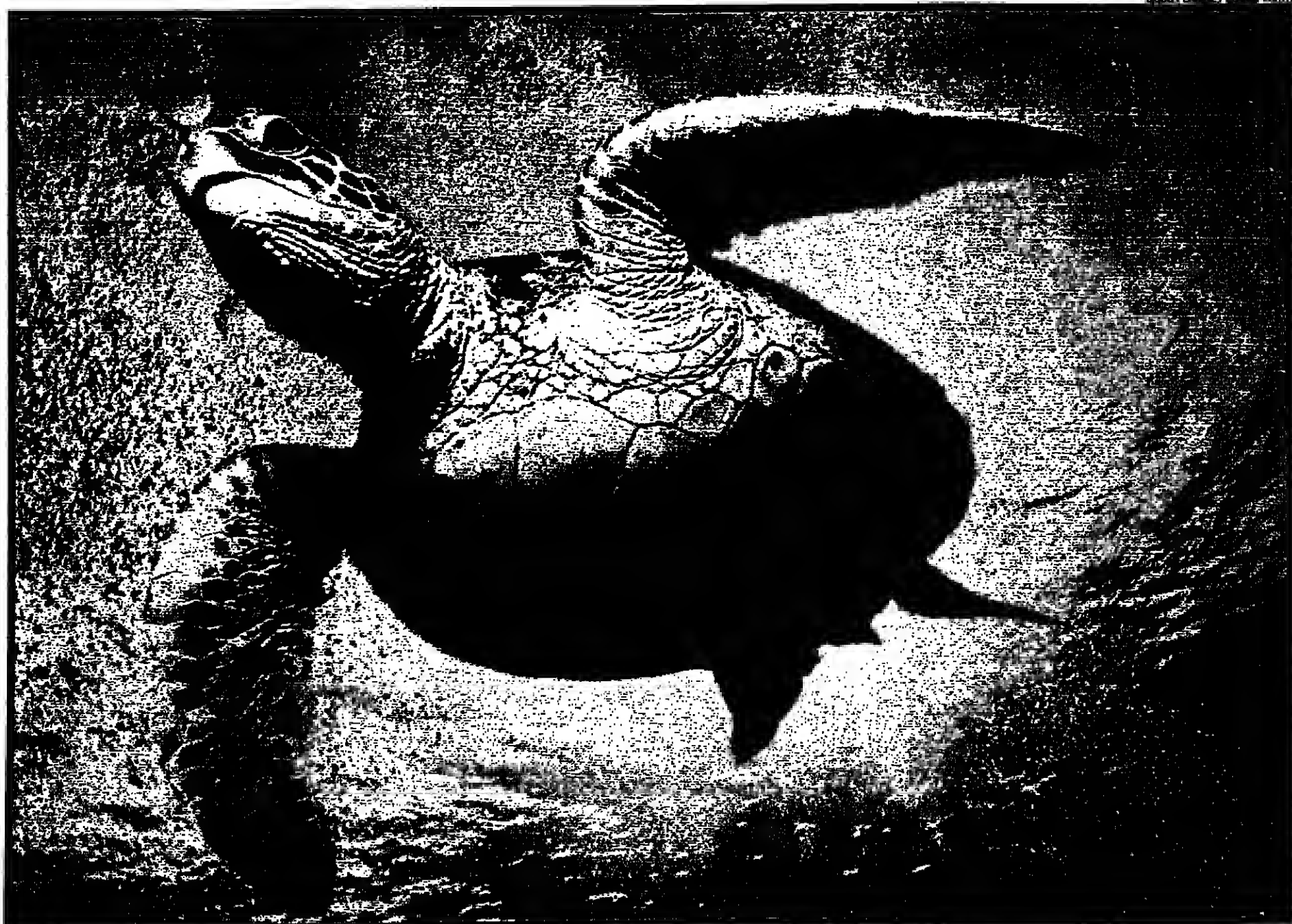
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NEXT WEEK

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Floating population: green turtles follow the same course each year en route to Ascension Island, a nesting area chosen because it is more or less free from predators

The long-distance turtles

Every year about 10,000 green turtles make a dangerous and exhausting journey to a remote outpost of the British Empire in what is one of the most extraordinary feats of animal migration. They only the elements and predators and cover huge distances to converge on Ascension Island in the Atlantic Ocean. Here they mate and hatch their young on the sandy beaches before crawling back out to sea and heading home to feeding grounds.

Turtles may use magnetic fields to map an epic journey to nesting grounds on a tiny Atlantic island. Nick Nuttall reports

But where the turtles go has remained a mystery. Could it be Africa, the Caribbean or the coast of Northern Central or Southern America? It has remained a source of much scientific speculation — until now. A team of British and Italian scientists have come up with answers using satellite tracking. Dr Graham Hays, from the University of Wales Swan-

sea, and Professor Floriano Papi and Dr Paolo Luschi, from the University of Pisa in Italy, have discovered a secret "turtle motorway" running between Ascension Island and the eastern coast of Brazil, along which female turtles travel more than 2,000km. The research — funded by the Natural Environment Research Council — lends weight to the

theory that turtles chart their route using either a powerful sense of smell or, like pigeons and possibly the bats, they use the Earth's magnetic field to guide them. The two biggest breeding populations of green turtles can be found in Costa Rica and on Ascension, a volcanic island and military base at which RAF planes refuel en

route to the Falklands. Despite its small size — 88 sq km — and isolation, Ascension Island supports one of the largest nesting populations of green turtles in the world. Ten thousand arrive each December for the seven-month nesting season.

The green turtle is one of the largest turtle species, with carapaces or shells measuring an average 1.15 metres long and weighing as much as 300kg. Dr Hays suspects that their powerful size is related to the distances they must travel.

Previous studies have used numbered tags to try to work out where the females travel, who meet up with the males offshore to mate, go. But these have proved unsatisfactory. So the British-Italian research team has turned to tiny satellite transmitters, weighing just 50g, which have been attached to five female green turtles. Through a link to two polar-orbiting NASA satellites, these transmitters have revealed the extraordinary journey that takes place as the turtles leave Ascension Island between late April and early July.

Dr Hays says that all turtles — males and females — take almost the exact same route for the first 300km, forming a tight band about 20km across as they head off, and diverging slightly afterwards as they move towards separate feeding grounds. "It is almost like a turtle motorway that they follow to complete their journey as quickly as possible," he says.

It takes the animals between 33 and 47 days to cover the journey of 2,000km or so from Ascension to various feeding grounds in and around Recife in Brazil. Dr Hays says that about 50 turtles a day make the journey during the three-month period up to early July.

It was once thought that when turtles were evolving, breeding places such as Ascension Island and what is modern-day South America were far closer together. Since then, the theory goes, land masses have drifted apart, forcing the animals to swim thousands of kilometres to traditional breeding grounds that were once quite near.

But Dr Hays says this theory is now being challenged — it is far more likely that Ascension has been chosen because it is relatively free from predators, making it worthwhile for a female to undertake such an extravagant journey despite the dangers en route.

The latest research may provide clues to how the green turtle, *Chelonia mydas*, navigates on such journeys. "They may make use of the Earth's magnetic field and have some kind of mental map of the whole of the South Atlantic to help them find this small, offshore island," says Dr Hays.

Another theory is that, like salmon finding their natal stream, the turtles may be able to sniff out the smell of Ascension Island in ocean currents.

Research team members plan to use satellites again to test the rival theories. Dr Hays says they hope to attach magnets to migrating animals which interfere with the magnetic field, but which are designed to drop off after several days. Such experiments have been carried out on homing pigeons, which are also supposed to navigate using magnetic fields.

If the turtles become disoriented, "losing the motorway" but then getting back on course once the magnets have fallen away, it would help to prove the magnetic map theory.

Dr Hays, whose findings have been published recently in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, says that even if this turtle mystery is solved, scores of others remain, including the fate of the hatchlings born on Ascension Island.

The tiny young turtles, weighing some 25g, crawl into the sea at night to avoid predatory frigate birds and swim away. But they do not have enough energy or stamina to make the journey with the adults back to Brazil, running out of steam just 24 hours from the island.

After this, they drift with currents throughout the region, snacking on whatever they can find.

"They are like little corks at this age and unable to dive much below the surface," Dr Hays explains. "They will feed on jellyfish, plankton, anything they can find."

Some may be swept to the Caribbean, others to South America and Africa, or down nearly as far as the Falkland Islands.

When they are five or six years old, it is thought they make the journey to the feeding grounds off northeast Brazil. Then, at about the age of 20, they join the mammoth trip to Ascension to breed.

The existence of the turtle motorway may have environmental implications. "The well-defined route along which they travel makes them highly vulnerable to fishing," says Dr Hays.

"So it could be disastrous if drift nets are used in the area. Even a small concentration of fishing efforts could remove all the green turtles coming and going from Ascension."

Is racism more than skin deep?

RACIAL prejudice has always been regarded as a branch of abnormal psychology rather than genetics. But in a new paper, Sir Fred Hoyle and Professor Chandra Wickramasinghe, of Cardiff University, have tried to cast it in a new light. The controversial couple, who delight in provocative ideas, have published the paper on the Internet and have submitted it for publication to the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*.

The different skin tones of northern and southern people hinges on the production of the pigment melanin in the skin. The cells responsible for producing it exist in equal numbers in both black and white skin. What differs is the efficiency with which it is produced, which is genetically controlled.

Two competing effects determine whether melanin is produced or not. It protects the skin against ultraviolet radiation, which would otherwise cause skin cancer. But at the same time some ultraviolet radiation must penetrate the skin to produce vitamin D. Too little sunlight and a poor diet lead to rickets, a crippling bone disease.

When white people move to hotter climates, they are prone to skin cancer, as is seen in Australia today. And when black people move to the colder north, they run the risk of rickets. Today's good diets mostly prevent this problem but even in the 1970s Asian immigrants to the North of the UK suffered higher rates of rickets than the natives.

The option of adding vitamin D supplements to the diet was not available to our ancestors. To them, it really mattered that they were the

right colour for surviving in the climatic region in which they found themselves. For much of human history the North was very cold, fringed by ice sheets. "White-skinned Nordic tribes living close to ice sheets under grey skies would have been clinging out a precarious existence, grabbing whatever food they could and utilising every photon of ultraviolet from the Sun to stay alive and free from rickets," say Hoyle and Wickramasinghe.

For people in the Tropics, drier, ice-free conditions with less cloud would have made for a remorseless flood of ultraviolet radiation. "Survival for them was contingent on the fullest expression of their melanin genes."

What happened, they speculate, when black and white met? Mating would have produced offspring with darker skins, on average, and thus more prone to rickets. Fewer would reach maturity, so such matings could have spelled extinction to the white population. "Under such circumstances, the emergence of mating prohibitions and colour prejudice would be a natural outcome," they say.

Putting it more generally, any community under hostile circumstances survives because it adapts to the environment. This will preclude mixing with a community tuned to a separate set of conditions.

If true, the thesis means that racial prejudice is far older than religious belief or the rule of law. Changing it through the law is likely to be ineffective, the two claim. "Only by understanding the logical source of a deep-rooted, socially obnoxious prejudice does it seem possible to change it in a peaceful way."

SCIENCE BRIEFING
Nigel Hawkes

Star-studded problem

TOO many stars far from the bustle of the galaxies could spell trouble for the Big Bang theory of the Universe. Astronomers will report today in Sydney that they have found more of these stars than the Big Bang theory predicts.

A team has been looking for stars in the spaces between the galaxies. People have looked for these "lost sheep" before, says the team

leader, Professor Ken Freeman of the Australian National University. "But they didn't find them."

The team found them by concentrating on stars at the end of their lives. Some 160 such objects have been found, from which it can be calculated how many ordinary stars there are between the galaxies.

The answer is far more than the conventional Big Bang theory predicts. "Even before this finding, it looked like we might have a bit too much normal matter in the Universe to fit the theory," says Freeman. "It was a borderline problem. But the extra stars we have found make it even worse."

Schelly left high and dry

CORMORANTS, the birds that are despised by anglers who claim they beat them to the fish, are about to get some company on the shores of Hawes Water in the Lake District. The lake is home to about 50 breeding pairs and also to a rare fish, the schelly, whose numbers have been in decline for the past 25 years.

A team led by Dr Ian Winfield, of the Institute of Freshwater Ecology in Ambleside, Cumbria, has been investigating the plight of the schelly (*Coregonus lavaretus*). He says that one problem is the rise and fall of water levels at Hawes Water, used as a reservoir by North West Water. Schelly lay eggs at the edge of the lake, but falling levels have left the eggs high and dry.

The cormorants are another threat, though as protected birds they have rights, too. The plan is to try to prevent them from nesting this spring. Just how this will be done is not yet decided, but David Cranshaw, of North West Water, says it will be no more than "low-key discouragement".

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THE TIMES
SCIENTISTS FOR THE NEW CENTURY

Tonight, in *From Captain Hook to Robocop*, Dr Peter Kyberd, from Oxford Orthopaedic Engineering Centre, will discuss how close scientists have come to creating the perfect artificial hand. Are man-machine hybrids like Robocop near to reality, or are they destined to remain in the realms of fiction?

The lecture will be held at 7.30pm at The Royal Institution of Great Britain, 21 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BS.

To reserve tickets (£5 / £3 concs), please call 0171-670 2985. They will be held for collection at the venue. Tickets will also be available from 6pm at the door.

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Why St John's is so absolutely divine

Sunday: "I thought we might go to St John's on Parade," I suggest brightly as we contemplate a baby-filled Sunday. "It's a bonnet competition for pets, sponsored by Macy's department store. Apparently the competitors go to great lengths."

"I think people who dress up their pets ought to be committed," says Peter, struggling with a pumpernickel bagel from Nussbaums and Wu. "I've no intention of encouraging them."

"We've got to get Thomas out of the apartment," I insist. "Well, it's Palm Sunday, we could go to church," says Peter. Though both our maternal grandfathers were vicars, we are not regular churchgoers and I suspect that he is trying to curry liturgical favour in advance of applying for the christening of Thomas — a potentially tricky request given that our son was born out of wedlock. In this corner of the Upper West Side we have a choice of two churches, each boasting a superlative: Riverside Church, financed

by John D. Rockefeller Jr and modelled on Chartres Cathedral, on top of whose tower swings the world's biggest carillon, with 74 bells; and St John the Divine, which is the biggest cathedral in the world (more than twice the square footage of St Paul's) — in fact, it could comfortably garage the Statue of Liberty under its dome, with plenty of room to spare.

We plump for St John's, with good reason. In matters social, sexual and doctrinal, it is arguably the most liberal church in the country — so liberal that it happily hosted a pagan celebration of the winter solstice. It was busily ordaining women priests back in 1971, and gay clerics are old mites — its detractors call it St John the Absolutely Divine.

As we wheel Thomas up the ramp we hear an unfamiliar sound: the chime of a stone-mason's chisel on granite. For St John's, begun in 1892, is a work in progress, and if the church could raise the requisite \$400 million, which it can't, it would take 50 more



Joanna Coles
NEW YORK LIFE

years to complete using medieval construction methods.

We enter the cathedral just as a huge organ fugue blasts down the neo-Gothic nave, but Thomas sleeps soundly

of a security steward at a pop concert.

Then a strange thing happens: the biggest cathedral in the world fills up with people, even though it's not Christmas; it's not even Easter. And there is only a light dusting of tourists, for unlike its better-known Roman Catholic rival, St Patrick's, nestled conveniently on 5th Avenue in the crook of Sak's elbow, and only a bouquet's lob from Tiffany's, St John's is off the beaten track.

Today it is a thoroughly mixed congregation: black families from Harlem, blonde boys in suits, their sisters in plaits and frocks and patent-leather shoes; white yuppies from Riverside Drive in camel coats with fur trim; Columbia grad students with leather jackets and trendy ugly Joe 90 glasses. It is so full that the service sheets run out.

"Move back! Make way!" orders the acolyte, and the robed procession approaches, ranked protectively around the Bishop of New York, the Right Rev Richard F. Grein. A

curate is swinging the incense thurible in the same way that Freddie Mercury used to swing his microphone, in complete arcs.

The liturgy unfolds like a passion play, in which our role is that of the crowd buying for an unenthusiastic Pontius Pilate to put Jesus to death. "Let Him be crucified!" we are required to yell, and Pilate played by the Dean asks: "Why, what evil has he done?", and the congregation shouts again: "Let Him be crucified!" Finally Pilate says: "I am innocent of this man's blood: see to it yourselves", and we all yell "His blood be on us and on our children!" — at which point Thomas begins to cry, in protest no doubt, at the injustice that the sins of the parents be visited upon the children.

To quieten him we wheel him around the vast space. Unlike European equivalents, with their monuments in forgotten medieval battles and marble effigies of ancient knights, St John's is a contemporary cathedral with a wide-

ly cast spiritual net, and even a mission statement that hangs like campaign colours over the entrance. A national AIDS memorial stands in a side chapel, dominated by a large, quilted rainbow flag, and a poster of Matthew Shepard (the gay student lynched last November in Wyoming), which reads: "Killed by homophobia." Next to it is a memorial to victims of genocide: Jews killed by Nazis in the Holocaust, represented by a skeletal metal statue, with a beseeching hand; Armenians killed by Ottoman Turks; Black Civil Rights martyrs killed by the Ku Klux Klan, and Bosnians killed by Serbs.

Other memorials honour those who died in the sinking of the Titanic, and in the crash of TWA Flight 800, in the north transept, beneath feathered headresses, a sculpted bison honours Native Americans, and there are also shrines to the scions of those New York dynasties the Bloomingdales and Astors. We pause in our perambulations to listen to the ser-

mon, preached by the Dean, Harry H. Pritchett Jr, in the lilting cadences of the American South. "There is no way around pain," he thunders. "only through it." Again Thomas squeals his objections, so we decide that he has had sufficient brimstone for his first religious outing and retreat to Poets' Corner. "All you have to do is write one true sentence," urges Ernest Hemingway, beautifully carved into the taupe stone. To which Henry James appears to have replied: "Live all you can. It's a mistake not to."

Monday: This morning *The New York Times* solemnly carries the results of the bonnet competition. First prize was won by a black Portuguese water dog wearing a spring floral display. Best cat was Merlin, a Persian chinchilla, who wore booties and a flowered headband topped by a pair of silk rabbit's ears. And the most popular exhibit turned out to be a ferret, called Houdini, wearing a bow tie.

Fitness fix or just ego massage?

Former slouch Magnus Linklater feels compelled to impress his personal trainer

I may be guilty, it may be vanity, but a nagging conscience keeps telling me that I should be fitter. Why? I have no athletic ambitions left. I have long since ceased to imagine that my superb physique will wreak sexual havoc by the swimming pool.

I live a mostly sedentary existence, with only the occasional race for a departing train to remind me about the state of my lungs. At my age, some modest restraint on the alcoholic front and a resolution to cut back on fattening foods is surely gesture enough. Is there anything more undignified than an overweight, middle-aged man pounding the pavement in search of some half-remembered state of physical grace?

Nevertheless, here I am, in

my fifties, doing precisely that. There is one simple reason: I have acquired a personal trainer. For anyone unfamiliar with the concept, this is a person who calls on you very early in the morning and forces you to do physically demanding things with your body of a kind that no sane person would readily contemplate.

It is a personalised version of the gym, with this difference: that while at a gym you shell out large sums of money and then never go, with a personal trainer there is no escape. He — or in my case, she — is always there, two mornings a week, without fail. I am aware, of course, that having a personal trainer is a routine status symbol in Beverly Hills or Belgravia, but in Edinburgh I feel I am breaking new ground. I find myself

dropping casual remarks such as "as I was saying to my personal trainer only the other day..." or "I'm sorry I can't be with you, but nothing comes between me and my personal trainer."

There is, too, a more personal motive. I have something to prove. I cannot remember who it was who said "a man possesses nothing save a brief loan of his own body", but I would like to return mine in reasonable condition. Over the years it has been treated in a somewhat slapdash manner, and the strains are beginning to show. The springs are creaking; the paintwork needs sprucing. Time, in short, for the MOT, or personal trainer. Louise Warrack came into my life six weeks ago, and has already transformed it. She is very fit, glamorous and



Trainer Louise and trainee Magnus: "I can imagine her leading a route march across Salisbury Plain with the squaddies limping in her wake"

demanding. The daughter of a schoolfriend, she is a former army captain, Sandhurst-trained, who has seen two years' service in Northern Ireland. She is 26. Things have obviously changed in the officer class since I last encountered it. I somehow cannot imagine Louise downsizing gins and tonics to the officers' mess, but I can imagine her leading a route march across Salisbury Plain, with most of the squaddies limping in her wake. Not that she is notably muscle-bound or intimidating. Far from it — she is trim, slender and extremely polite. But firm. Once you are on your back, muscles screaming as they are forced into action at her command, there is no gainsaying her. She raises your tolerance on a scale of one to ten, with ten being a state of terminal exhaustion. She is not really happy unless you are up to eight. And making Louise happy is, I suppose, part of the deal. She arrives at 8am, wearing a sweatshirt with "Personal Trainer" on the back, and carrying a heart monitor that you strap around your chest.

Immediately the symbol of a pumping heart appears on the watchface, and thereafter your every exertion is digitally reflected. At 80 you are scarcely moving. Above 170 and the paramedics should be on standby. The object is to stay somewhere in between. We prepare to hit the streets of Edinburgh at a brisk walking pace. The New Town lace curtains twitch as I emerge from my front door in the company of a fetching young lady, and I can

imagine the comments: "Well, that's Mr Linklater, but I don't believe that's Mrs Linklater." As we reach the Water of Leith the watchface shows 120. Louise suggests "a gentle jog" — it is a truth universally acknowledged that one of the more absurd aspects of the male gender is his need to impress the female with demonstrations of his physical prowess, particularly if she happens to be half his age. Thus my gentle jog begins at Linford Christie pace and ends shortly afterwards with me bent double and the heart monitor veering wildly into the 180s. "How would you rate that on a scale of one to ten?" asks Louise solicitously. "Oh, barely touched six," I wheeze. "Nevertheless, perhaps we should slow it down a little," she suggests. I nod vigorously. Words don't come easily at such moments.

On the way back we stop at intervals to do little push-ups by the roadside, to the amazement of passers-by and my own acute embarrassment. Louise is very good at morale-boosting remarks on these occasions. "Good, well done. What an improvement," she murmurs encouragingly. I glow with pride. As soon as we are back inside, we lie together on the floor, contracting our bodies into unusual positions. Muscles that thought they had long since been retired are pressed back into action. Legs are swung, knees bent, calves stretched, backs arched. There is much pain involved but no little satisfaction, too. After all, if you had never thought to rest your hands palms-down

on the ground while bending from the waist with legs straight, then doing so becomes a small personal triumph. And if you can then get up again, why, that's another ambition fulfilled.

I now find I am becoming curious about Louise's other clients. Does she say the same flattering things to them? Are

they improving faster, slower or not at all? She is, however, maddeningly discreet, and thus far I have elicited few personal details. Which, I suppose, is just as well. After all, one's personal trainer knows more about one's body than anyone else apart from one's wife, and there are certain intimate details about my physique that I would prefer not to become the talk of the town.

Of course, you may argue, I could do all those things on my own. Why pay £25 an hour when you could be your own personal trainer for nothing? I have thought about that, and can find no rational answer. Except that I know I would never do it.

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Partnership puts Nato to the test

Richard Beeston on the shared foes of Milosevic and Primakov

If Nato planners thought cloudy weather and Serb military might would present the toughest challenge to their bomber pilots, they miscalculated. The greatest threat to the alliance's ability to force President Milosevic to back down emerged yesterday in the unlikely form of a round, stern-faced Russian with one of the sharpest minds in international diplomacy.

Yevgeny Primakov, the Russian Prime Minister, succeeded in the space of six hours of talks in Belgrade in hatching a plan aimed at the alliance's faultlines. It could prove more damaging to the allied air effort than the notorious Balkan weather or a battery of SAM missiles.

Details of the deal, effectively an offer by the Serbs to halt their ethnic cleansing in return for a Nato ceasefire, is aimed at splitting Nato's resolve, just when the alliance is ready to step up its operations and seriously damage Belgrade's military capability.

The only surprise is that it has taken the odd couple of Mr Primakov and Mr Milosevic this long to get round to it. In the post-Cold War period the two former communists have shown an impressive ability to read Western public opinion and divide the supposedly solid resolve of Bonn, London, Paris and Washington.

Much has been made of the so-called ancient alliance between Russia and Serbia, forged between the Slavic Orthodox brethren who have been thrown together by history in times of trouble. The truth is that there is little romantic or spiritual in the current partnership. As one Russian colleague pointed out, supporting the Serbs can be an expensive business. The last time Russia threw its weight behind Belgrade, the Tatar was dragged into the First World War, which precipitated the Russian Revolution and led to 70 years of communism. For their part the Serbs still remember being "liberated" by Soviet troops in 1944, an occasion for Red Army soldiers to go on a raping spree across the city.

Nevertheless, the ties that bond Mr Primakov and Mr Milosevic are strong. Both are driven by a mutual desire to confuse and thwart efforts by the West to involve itself in their affairs. Mr Primakov can claim to be the father of the post-Cold War doctrine of "divide and confuse". Just when coalition forces were poised to go to war against Iraq in January 1991, he was sent by President Gorbachev to persuade his old friend President Saddam Hussein to withdraw his forces from Kuwait. It was only thanks to the Iraqi leader's slim grasp of international politics that he failed to take the advice. Western leaders confessed later that his plan would have brought Operation Desert Storm to a halt before it had even begun.

If the policy was Mr Primakov's brainchild, then Mr Milosevic has to claim credit for mastering its use. Over the past eight years newspaper archives have recorded page

after page of empty threats and frustrated Western initiatives intended to halt Serb offensives and massacres in the former Yugoslavia. In nearly every instance Mr Milosevic succeeded in giving away just enough to break Western resolve, and reducing Nato's once solid alliance into an unseemly assortment of squabbling partners.

Mr Primakov has not been idle, however. After serving as the director of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service he was moved to head the Foreign Ministry in Moscow in 1996. He quickly realigned Russia's foreign policy away from its pro-Western position. Strongly opposed to Nato's eastward expansion, he also sought to strengthen ties with China and India while re-establishing frayed links with former Soviet republics. In world affairs, his big success came last year when he negotiated a compromise between the UN and Iraq, forestalling imminent airstrikes by Britain and America.

Yesterday's offer or a deal may still take some days to refine and promote in the capitals of the West, but Mr Primakov and Mr Milosevic may have correctly judged that Western determination could once again be unpicked.

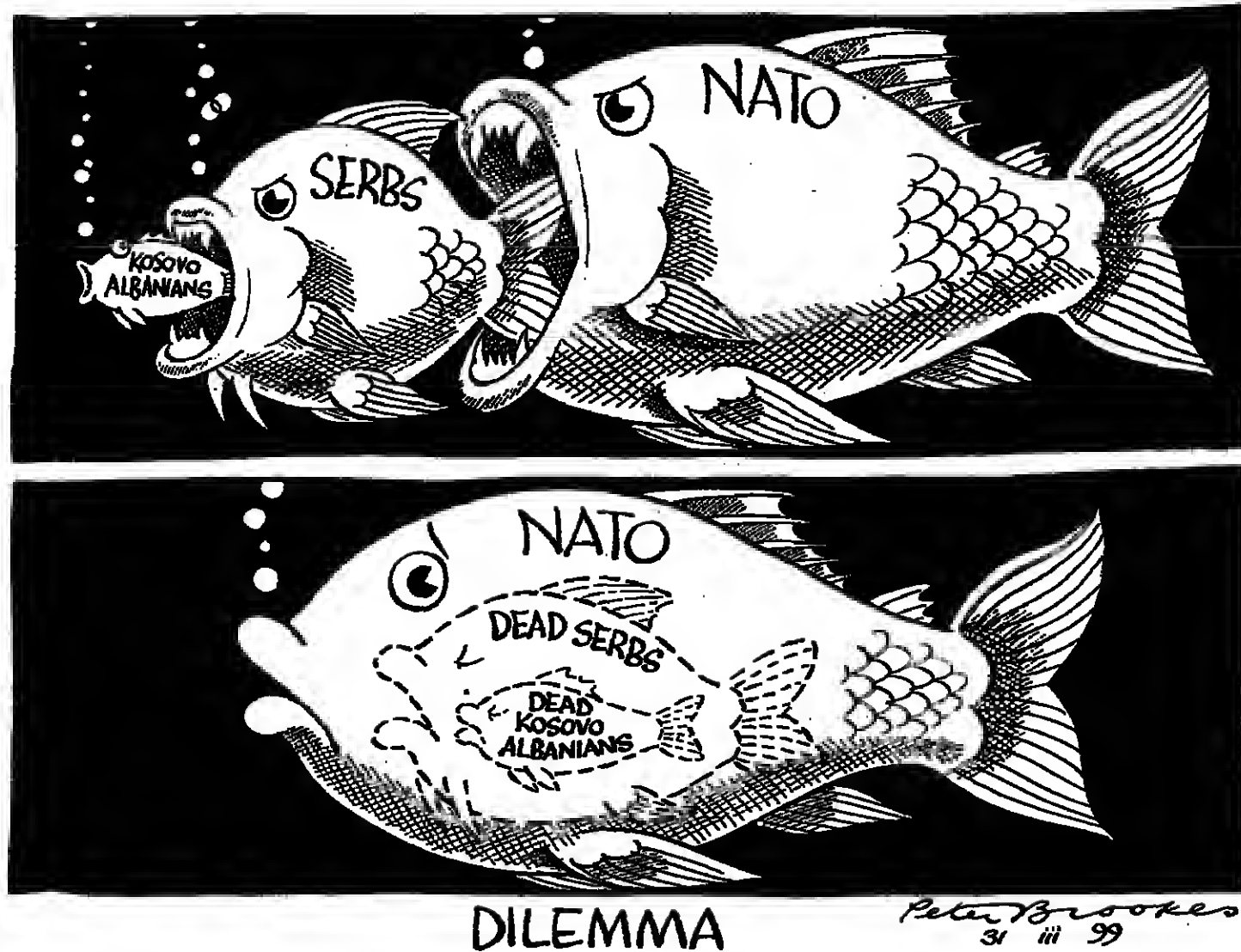
Among Nato nations, Greece and Italy are already in favour of halting the attacks. France is openly supportive of the Primakov initiative and many of the smaller alliance members will need little prodding to agree to a ceasefire. The alternative, hinted at darkly as the need to mobilise a huge ground force, is enough to make even the toughest

Balkans poker player throw in his hand. For Russia, Kosovo is a battle Moscow cannot afford to lose. What happens in a burning Yugoslavia province could well decide the balance of power in the East. At stake is whether the next century will see other former Warsaw Pact members and even Soviet republics join Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in the ranks of Nato.

For Mr Primakov, a victory will be a crowning achievement which could help to deflect attention away from his poor handling of the economy and establish him as the undisputed successor to President Yeltsin. As for Mr Milosevic his forces have nearly achieved their objective of forcing out the Albanian population from their homes in Kosovo. Despite his pledge to allow refugees to return home, his bloody legacy suggests otherwise. The tens of thousands of refugees who have been burnt out of their farms, raped and shelled will not easily be persuaded to walk back over the mountains.

For now, President Clinton has rejected the Primakov-Milosevic offer. But the two will keep trying to divide the West, hoping that they can sow doubt in the alliance before Nato finally has the force it needs in place and the weather clears over the Balkans.

comment@the-times.co.uk



Parasites and peddlers

Biographers are the lowest form of literary life, demeaning both subject and reader, says Michael Holroyd

In an article for the *New York Review of Books*, John Updike recently set out to attack biography. Even the best biographies were too long, he suggested, and what was the point of them anyway? They did not really sell. They were not really needed. All that literary biographies could do was to send readers back to the subjects' own books. In short: they were reminders — and reminders.

Those last words are mine, not John Updike's. For such was his good nature, and such had been his enjoyment of, for example, George Painter's *Life of Proust*, that his attack turned into an affectionate single cheer for biography — rather in the manner of E.M. Forster's two cheers for democracy.

But I believe I can do better than that: I can quench that single cheer, because I can attack biography from the inside. The truth is that biographers flatter themselves — after all, no one else will. They regard themselves as saints apparently because they are always thinking of other people. And yet they are not universally popular nor greatly loved. "Every man has his disciples," Oscar Wilde famously said, "and it is always Judas who writes the biography." George Eliot too declared that "biographers are generally a disease of English literature" — and this despite the fact that she lived happily with Goethe's biographer, G.H. Lewes. But she was speaking collectively, not about her single exception. Nevertheless, all biographers believe that they are that single exception.

All this invective, these insults, are perforce written by biographers as if they were battle honours. Yet it is a battle they have not won. For this artillery of abuse has multiplied and magnified during this century, and it looks as though it will be a good growth area for the verbal armaments industry of the 21st century. Rebecca West, for example, pictured biographers profitably picking round the tombstones of the newly dead; and Germaine Greer, who dismissed biographies as "pre-digested carrion", later called on biographers to take up, for God's sake, an honourable trade. Did they, I ask, go far enough? And what, in any case, provokes this barrage of hostility?

In rough and ready terms there are, I believe, three categories of biographer. First comes the biographer who writes about the very

famous, either among the living, or the warm dead. This class of biographer keeps company with film stars, murderers and the Royal Family. What people chiefly hate about them is that they make a lot of money. For surely they make it in a highly dubious way? They trade on others' miseries, dine out on their tragedies and make the trivial perpetually portentous.

They also exploit our own weaknesses, our prurience, our snobbery. They are our worst selves. They encourage us to behave badly, indeed they count on it. They are the virtual receivers, these biographers, of stolen money. They do not make money, they take money. And it is

Not are they proper writers, but simply jumped-up journalists — the illegitimate descendants of Boswell, that keeper of a great journal. They used to be called "Grub-Street biographers": creatures that inhabited the slum end of Fleet Street, and who, in the words of Joseph Addison (the owner of *The Spectator* magazine in the early 18th century), "watch for the death of a great man, like so many undertakers, on purpose to make a penny of him". It was impossible, he added, to reflect on this sort of writer without growing indignant as well as contempt.

So not much has changed. These biographers still sway to the music of fashion, bringing down the mighty from their high places when it is safe and popular to do so; but allowing us to rise into a world of myth and vanity when it best serves their advantage. And always they take the easy way: purveying the simple story of romantic rumour and scandalous speculation peppered up, whenever the plot sags, by decorative invention. They thrive in an infantile climate where the cult of youth remains unmocked, unchecked. For they are writing fairy stories for adults who never grow up. These

are the most newsworthy biographers of our own day and perhaps the easiest to attack. Fat sitting ducks.

But what of contemporary historical biographers, the political biographers of some last-but-one prime minister? They are easily recognised hybrids with one foot in a university, the other in Downing Street. This is the second category of biographer. The ambitious professor. Is he, she, any better? Are they not trying to get the sales of the Grub-Street merchants without their street-vulgarity — the one jumped-up, the other dumbed-down?

Certainly these almost-instant political biographers are not greatly esteemed by their peers. They are looked down on by other historians who write for their academic selves, and they attract little interest from the self-employed professional biographers who write for almost no one. They are at the shallow end of history, steering close to what is called the Cleopatra's Nose school of history (the notion, masquerading as an ideology, that had Cleopatra's nose been a fraction longer, as long as Pinocchio's nose became, or as long as Cyrano de Bergerac's was, then the course of history would have been dramatically changed). Can you get much more superficial than that? Even with a host of reference notes? It is the sort of history that film-makers love, the television history served with music and a grave narrator.

There is something curiously obsequious too about these all-but-instant historians. They appear to promise statesmen and prime ministers — particularly prime ministers — a good end-of-term report, a favourable verdict, in return for a few invitations, a few decorations. But they are really history's butlers, continually absorbed by their duty of rating the events they announce in order of conventional importance, always busy solemnly usher-

ing in the facts, for ever replete with their censorious duties. These scribes are eternally guarding their self-esteem, like Admirable Crichtons, by reminding themselves of their intellectual superiority from their socially inferior position when they return to their islands of academe. What a crew! A pox on the lot of them!

Finally, there is the third category, the literary or artistic biographer. Surely they are better. Do they not go back to Dr Johnson? Are they not part of our literature? It is true that, like the poor, they seem always to have been with us. But the answer as to whether they are part of our contemporary literature is a resounding "No!"

Ask any novelist, poet or playwright what he or she thinks about such biographers and you will not have to wait long for a heartfelt answer. Biographers are parasites. They are fifth column agents within the ranks of literature, intent on reducing all that is imaginative, and all that is creative in literature, to pedestrian autobiography. They are the slaves of their absurd and meagre theories. They feed off literature — they try to replace it.

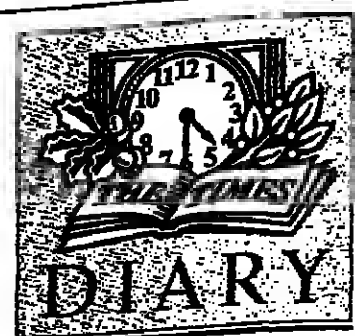
They rob us also of enchantment — they are continually trying to explain how the rabbit got into the hat before the novelist or poet produces the magic, and they pervert the poet's creative imagination by presenting it as a mere conjuring trick. They overlook Marlowe's mighty line, and tell us with tedious length what Byron had for breakfast.

They are at best superfluous, these literary biographers with their talentless, dust-jacket smiles. For the essential truth is simple: Flaubert was born. Flaubert wrote his novel, *Flaubert*. It is his work, which is unique, that matters, not the ordinary experience which he shared with so many others: That may be a branch of sociology which itself is a jigsaw with a thousand pieces of biography in it.

Michael Holroyd is author of biographies of Bernard Shaw and Lytton Strachey. This article is an extract from a talk given to the Biographers' Club.

comment@the-times.co.uk

Sirion Jenkins is away.



Crown affair

UNEASY lies the head. Buckingham Palace modernisers are pushing for the monarch to be stripped of her crown when she opens the Scottish parliament in July. Mary Francis, the Queen's deputy private secretary, who wants to keep the beano low-key, suggested a crownly compromise: that a child carry it before the Queen.

Word reached the Lord Lyon, Sir Malcolm Innes, one of the working group organising things. "That would be illegal," he said firmly. Debate rages. Over to Lord St John of Fawsley: "She should wear it on her head to reflect the links between Scotland and the monarchy. I don't think a child should carry it. They might drop it."

CRISIS at International Who's Who: Slobodan Milosevic has not answered its questionnaire on hobbies. How about 'genocide'?



■ SHOULD Kirsty Young win a radio industry award for her breakfast show on Talk Radio, no one will be more surprised than Kelvin MacKenzie. The head of the radio station and the Channel 5 presenter (above) said a sad goodbye soon after Kelvin breezed in last summer. Young quit after she realised MacKenzie would not be showing her the star treatment to which she had become accustomed. She had been allowed to appear only four days a week and then planned to take much of the summer off. The station reckons she presented the show only 60 times and failed to boost listeners. But Young's many admirers put her up for a Sony Radio Award, which will be handed out next month. "If she wins the award," MacKenzie ventures "it will show the award is not worth putting up on your lavatory wall."

IS SWIMMING with dolphins great therapy after all? Wayne Sleep has sustained his ankle while enjoying a pas de deux with a leather beast off Florida. He landed flat-footed in the water, which has forced him to pull out of rehearsals for Aspects of Dance.

■ KATE WINSLET will join inhalers at a mammoth garden party for chain-smokers. The actress, something of a "celebrity puffer", will be among guests at a summer ball on a Thames islet to promote "tolerance for tobacco addicts". Forest, pro-puffing coughers, is to rename the Kingston mudbank "Smokers Haven". Anti-faggers are pleased: "It means we won't be forced to breathe their smoke," says one but.



■ COFFINS are set to get bigger to accommodate the expanding British waistline. The statutory 28in-wide coffin is proving cramped for hefty sorts. A pilot study in Wales has tried outsize coffins, but pollution checks are planned to monitor levels of "harmful emissions".

Elsewhere, coffin-makers are sneakily making wider boxes, but crematoriums are struggling: their descending coffin lifts are not wide enough. "It's causing embarrassment," says Paul Stubbs, technical adviser for the Federation of British Cremation Authorities.

CLARE SHORT recovered from a speech about the poverty of Kosovo refugees in true Labour style: lunch at Christopher's.

■ WAR on both fronts for George Robertson. After the Defence Secretary's wife objected to a Dunblane memorial play area near their home, the Robertsons have moved across town. Mrs R worried that it would bring traffic, and the plots fenced about ministerial security. "Their moving house has nothing to do with the stinging of the playground," I am assured.

JASPER GERARD

'It is pathetic that the FA now permits mixed teams but, as soon as the menstrual cycle strikes, girls are out'

Alyson Rudd

It is all the time, contemplate how successful and famous a footballer I would now be had my childhood been different. The "if only" syndrome takes hold of everyone at some point. If only the babysitter had not run off with Dad, if only I had never agreed to drive Sid home after he robbed the post office. And now a report in the *Journal of Sports Medicine* argues that if only women had never been physiologically analysed, they would be faster and stronger and more competitive.

Anatomists with an agenda apparently promoted the differences between men and women. As sport became more organised and more significant as a symbol of national prowess, women were being told to rest their wombs and soothe their hormones or, if they insisted on becoming involved, to make the sandwiches. This may all be true

and anatomist may well have once been a pseudonym for misogynist. But a woman's ability to carry a child rendered her the quiet, stay-at-home, nurturing type long before scientists discovered our extra layer of subcutaneous fat and PMT.

What is interesting is that women were being warned about exertion at a time when today's rules of sport were being thrashed out. It is not entirely fatuous to argue that had women been competing in marathons for as long as men their performance would compare more favourably, as each year the improvement in women's times for long distance races is more than double that of the improvement in men's. Are women simply catching up on themselves because they did not compete until the 1960s or are they catching up with the men? Modern anatomists argue that

women's bodies are better suited to arduous running and could therefore overtake men — gasping for breath and mopping their brows in a moist effete fashion — in super-marathons. That is assuming, of course, they all start the race at the same time. The marathon fits the journal's theory best. Most other sport is about power. The fittest, strongest man will always have the edge over the fittest, strongest woman and it is that fact rather than old wives' tales about running ruining your uterus that keeps the sexes apart in competition.

The real question should be whether that is a good enough reason for separating us. And it is not. In every race someone crosses the line last. Families grouped around the TV to watch

the Olympics have always uttered "oh the poor love" as the best male athlete Honduras can provide is lapped twice over. At least half, maybe more, of the women competing in the equivalent race would have beaten him so why not give them the chance? Would it really matter if 49 times out of 50 a man won gold and silver and a woman took bronze and sixth place?

There are events which only black athletes win because their fast twitch muscles twitch faster than those of white athletes, but no one is suggesting we have black-only races. No doubt Fascist anatomists would have recommended that such muscles be surgically removed had they spotted them, but curiously it is women who have suffered more than any other "minority" when

it comes to sport. This is particularly evident in team sports. I have played alongside men against all-male opposition in football matches and I have been on the winning side, and even been man of the match. Take a look at any football team, Premiership or pub side, and you will see at least one player who is shorter, fatter, slower or slimmer, but who is there because he can conjure a peach of a shot at a set piece or scrap better than anyone when it is muddy and the midfield is crowded.

But I can only play with men in friendlies in the park or in leagues not affiliated to the Football Association. The FA now permits mixed teams but, as soon as the menstrual cycle strikes, girls are out. This is every bit as pathetic as the conclusions the hormone scientists drew in the 1920s.

There are physiological differences between the sexes but this matters only at the highest level; below that there are a multitude of shapes and sizes and mentalities of men and women, so let them run and jump and shoot together. Some will take a short break while they have a baby but then some will disappear while they nurse a groin strain or a broken leg. In the three months before you break a limb your stamina does not improve, but in the three months after conception it does. Indeed until the sixth month of my current pregnancy my overall performance on the pitch was quite superb.

If only sport had never become so obsessed with segregation, if only a man could shake the hand of the woman who bowled him out without feeling suicidal, if only.

comment@the-times.co.uk



FEINT AND THRUST

Milosevic's offer is just a ploy to split Nato

Urged on by Yevgeni Primakov, Slobodan Milosevic made his first offer to Nato last night. His demands — that Nato first stop bombing, in return for a promise that he would then gradually reduce Serb forces in Kosovo and permit its "Yugoslav citizens" to go home — would have been unacceptable before he put Kosovo to the torch. They are both offensive and inadequate now. Mr Milosevic knows that; this is no surrender, but a feint designed to split the Alliance.

His timing is, as usual, tactically shrewd. The accounts given by the battered, traumatised refugees streaming out of Kosovo are evidence that an entire people is being persecuted with racist cruelty: it would be psychotic were it not deliberate and premeditated. But, as Mr Milosevic doubtless intended, this humanitarian Armageddon has also sapped public trust in Nato's claim to be stopping a human tragedy. Nato's weaker minds may thus be tempted to pause and explore. Until Mr Milosevic silences and removes the guns and accepts the presence of Nato-led peacekeepers, there is nothing to explore.

Nato, and Western publics, should keep the past decade of broken Milosevic pledges clearly in mind, and keep their nerve. Had Nato not been about to bomb last October, Kosovo would have been gutted long since; Serb forces had already destroyed dozens of villages and driven 300,000 people into the icy hills. There they would have remained, and starved, had not the threat of force exacted from Mr Milosevic a pledge to pull back his forces and admit international observers. But this, like yesterday's manoeuvre, was only tactical. By January he was actively preparing a still more ruthless offensive. Over the next month, while his aides dragged out talks on an accord Mr Milosevic had no intention of signing, his forces drove out 65,000 more refugees, bringing the total back up to 300,000.

It was this indisputable evidence that, in violation of every international convention governing the treatment of civilians in war, a murderous campaign was under way that forced Nato to act. Had the Alliance held off, it would, as Tony Blair said, "have shown unpardonable weakness and dereliction". Its critics would today be drawing comparisons with the neglected genocide

in Rwanda. Nato's credibility as a force for European stability would be in shreds. The whole of Europe would be a more dangerous place. That is why Nato's imperative is strategic as well as humanitarian; and it is vital that the immediate emergency should not obscure the strong national and strategic interest in extinguishing, later than was wise and thus at heavy cost, this southern European blaze.

Mr Blair has drawn parallels with 1914, the shot in Sarajevo that echoed round the world. It is not exact; it is no longer a case of the decaying Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires providing tinder. But the long-fused explosion in Kosovo has dire implications for Nato's southern flank, where Greece and Turkey nurse old hatreds. That is not because of the risks of a Greater Albania — the least likely scenario — but because the uprooting of up to two million Albanians would fracture delicate political balances in a neighbourhood of melting-pot politics and disputed frontiers. Macedonia has done much to integrate its large Albanian minority; but a permanent doubling of its Albanian population could reignite communal intolerance. Greece has barely been persuaded to recognise Macedonia at all; and Bulgaria also has old territorial claims on it; Turkey, which is deeply aroused by the plight of the 60-70,000 ethnic Turks in Kosovo, has claims on Bulgaria. All these states are now backing Nato, but if Macedonia imploded, or if Belgrade went to the "defence" of Macedonian fellow-Serbs, they could be tempted to intervene.

Nato's engagement is vital in this context; and not only in this context. Respect for the Alliance is at stake not just in Europe, but in the Islamic world, where any perception that Nato ignores atrocities against Muslims feeds anti-Western sentiment. And in America, after the transatlantic crisis over Bosnia in 1992-93, Nato's European members cannot afford the charge that here was another European mess that they were not prepared to do enough about. The best riposte to Mr Milosevic is to rehearse these strategic arguments steadily and clearly, while intensifying the air campaign. This time, he has winked; next, he will blink. Nato must wait for his capitulation.

PORTILLO FOR CHAIRMAN

Hague needs an early and radical Shadow Cabinet reshuffle

In the past few weeks William Hague has acquired a fresh approach to politics and a new spokeswoman. It is too early to tell what the impact of either his "Kitchen table Conservatism" or Amanda Platell will be. In both cases the change will be limited for as long as the Conservative leader retains the same front bench players. Although he conducted an extensive reshuffle last year, Mr Hague's team is still more Shadow than Cabinet. Sir Norman Fowler, the Shadow Home Secretary, is serving in his post out of loyalty alone, not ambition. Michael Howard, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, has announced his intention to return to the back benches. Because of this, the Conservative response to events has, at least in part, been hampered.

That alone should offer Mr Hague an incentive to conduct his next reshuffle earlier rather than later. The party will shortly face a by-election in Newark — probably on May 6 — where victory is critical for Mr Hague's credibility. A mid-term defeat in a marginal seat, where the sitting MP was convicted of electoral corruption and when the whole of the local Labour Party has since been suspended, would be an absolute humiliation. Mr Hague needs a new and attractive team before the Newark contest.

There are a number of options available for the position of Shadow Home Secretary. A case can be made for Ann Widdecombe, on the basis of her previous tenure in that department under John Major, or for Liam Fox, who could use the portfolio to develop Conservative thinking on constitutional issues. The question of

Shadow Foreign Secretary is much more problematic. The ideal candidate has to be of a certain seniority but not intimately associated with the Major era. The same person should provide a sharp contrast with Robin Cook while not holding views on European monetary union that might exacerbate internal Tory divisions.

Michael Ancram is one possible contender who can meet all these conditions. He is thus a compelling candidate for Shadow Foreign Secretary. His promotion would produce a vacancy for Conservative Party Chairman. The Tory leader should regard this as an opportunity. There is no requirement for this post to be filled by a Member of Parliament. Mr Hague is free to think creatively and appoint the person who would best suit his new approach. This freedom should lead him to the door of Michael Portillo.

There will be some in Mr Hague's circle who fear that elevating Mr Portillo in this fashion offers a hostage to fortune. It could invite an ongoing comparison between the two men that was not always flattering to the Tory leader. This is a short-sighted argument. The Conservatives desperately need a chairman with strong presentation skills and the managerial ability to impose some discipline on its sluggish review of policy. Mr Portillo's arrival in Smith Square would provide a huge boost to party morale before crucial elections. This would be a bold appointment and one that required Mr Hague to show courage and self-confidence. These are not unreasonable qualities to ask of a politician who aspires to the position of Prime Minister.

REPENT AND REVISE

Local authorities need freedom to build fewer new homes

Nothing in life is certain apart from death, taxes, and the need to rewrite Whitehall forecasts. After double-checking the Civil Service's crystal ball, which previously predicted that 4.4 million new homes would be needed by 2021. The forecast is so sensitive to changes in the key assumptions that even this is "not a precise figure", according to the mystic minister. Mr Prescott's candour is welcome. By acknowledging the unreliability of statistics, he has underscored the flaws of trying to predict and provide for new housing, an approach he claims is now "dead".

Any congratulations, however, should be muted. England's green fields are still at risk. The number of households in England is now projected to rise by a fifth between 1996 and 2021. Ministers, rightly, want to build 60 per cent of these homes in urban areas. Local authorities will be required to consider re-using existing property and brownfield sites before releasing greenfield land. But even then, building the remaining 40 per cent would asphalt over rural land almost four times

the size of Milton Keynes. Local authorities have already developed, or earmarked, vast tracts of countryside. In the South East, land for 800,000 dwellings forecast as required has been built upon or set aside.

The new figures give rise to doubts as to whether all this land will be needed. The 3.8 million figure, as Mr Prescott admits, "could be subject to some variability". The figures are heavily dependent on the most volatile assumptions. A 1 per cent rise in interest rates, for example, could cut the number of households forming by about 250,000. A 1 per cent fall in unemployment could result in household formation rising by 30,000. Mr Prescott is therefore wise to caution planners to use the forecasts simply to "inform debate".

In that debate, Mr Prescott should allow local authorities to adjust their regional plans to reflect these new figures. After the warnings attached to these predictions, planners should not be forced to increase the number of homes they intend to provide so as to meet a putative, dubious need. Only by permitting such flexibility will Mr Prescott prove that the era of predicting and providing is truly over.

سكنا من الأهل

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Moral imperative to tackle Kosovo's human tragedy

From the Most Reverend the Lord Eames, Archbishop of Armagh

Sir, During the House of Lords debate on Kosovo on March 25, I referred to the commonly expressed justification for the Nato action in Serbia as "international humanitarian intervention". But I felt it necessary to draw attention to another factor which even then I believed required international humanitarian intervention, viz the human tragedy of refugees and displaced persons who, in their thousands, were beginning to flood across the Balkans. In the days since that debate my fears have been realised to an extent that none of us could have imagined.

I believe that the military action of the Allies was justified in the terms and limitations of "the just war" but that, given the magnitude of the human tragedy of Kosovo, there is a moral imperative on the Allies, and in particular the United Kingdom, to initiate humanitarian relief to meet the largest displacement of human beings since the Second World War.

I believe the Government must not only take a lead in this respect but be seen to do so. It is not just military action that we will be judged by future generations.

Yours etc,
1 ROBERT ARMAGH,
House of Lords,
March 30.

From Ms Rosalie Huzzard

Sir, The result of Nato bombing has been more barbarity and killings in Kosovo, more refugees, destruction and death in Yugoslav cities and the threat of the conflict spreading to Macedonia. Russia has severed relations with Nato. Milosevic is consolidating his position as war leader. A land war looms and no one knows what the outcome will be.

We are told there was no alternative — the Serbs refused to negotiate. But there is always an alternative. The mediation and reconciliation process through the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) could have been supported more wholeheartedly and for a longer period.

Yours sincerely,
ROSALIE HUZARD
(Secretary, British Section,
Women's International League
for Peace & Freedom,
37 Hollingworth Road,
Peters Wood, Orpington BR5 1AQ,
29 March.

From Mrs Mara Johnstone

Sir, When Krajina was "ethnically cleansed" by the Croatian Army, my aunt was one of the hundreds of thousands who fled through Bosnia to

reach safety a week later in Serbia. There was no suggestion then that the Croats should be bombed by Nato forces. However, my aunt is now faced with Nato bombing, as a refugee, in Belgrade.

Why does Nato uphold such double standards?

Yours faithfully,
M. JOHNSTONE,
Chapel Hill,
Penton, Carlisle CA6 5QP,
March 29.

From Mr Christopher Ellis

Sir, It's a bit rich for Nato to use the intensification of horror in Kosovo as a justification for the continuing bombing of Serbia and Kosovo when it has been the bombing itself that has caused the intensification, entirely predictably. The bombing has only served to make the situation worse.

Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER ELLIS,
18 Upper Old Park Lane,
Farnham, Surrey GU9 0AT,
celis10@compuserve.com
March 29.

From Dom Aldhelm
Cameron-Brown, OSB

Sir, Is it not a little ridiculous that we are trying to bomb a foreign government into submission, when we cannot even control paramilitary terrorists and their punishment beatings on our own soil?

Yours truly,
FR ALDHELM,
Prinkash Abbey,
Cranham, Gloucester GL4 8EX,
March 27.

From Mr R. J. Staples

Sir, By calling Nato's political leaders "populists" does Mr Robin Edwards (letter, March 26) mean that they are democratically elected? Are the wishes of the majority always to be regarded with such disdain? Democracy should mean more than the people being ignored between elections every four or five years.

Yours truly,
R. J. STAPLES,
59 Monkstone Drive,
Whitley Bay, NE26 1SY,
staples@whitleybayfreezone.co.uk
March 26.

From Mr Richard Hogg

Sir, Members of our Armed Forces trust the politicians to ask them to risk their lives in legitimate circumstances. As an infantry officer in the 1970s I was happy to serve in Nato as an ally for the defence of Europe, and

to be involved in other conflicts where Britain had a legitimate right of intervention.

I believe the current intervention in Yugoslavia is a betrayal of this trust. British lives are being put at risk in a venture that can only be justified as in the national interest through dubious logic and, for the first time, puts Nato in the position of an aggressor. My military training also taught me that it was unacceptable to get involved in others' civil wars. While holding no brief for Milosevic, I regard the credibility of Nato as a defensive alliance — rather than a figleaf to legitimise US global police action — as far more important.

For the first time in my life I cannot support an action involving British Forces. Our political masters have let us down badly by blindly following America.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD HOGG,
Lower Farm, Duckington,
Malpas, Cheshire SY14 8LQ,
richardhogg@msn.com
March 30.

From Mr Mike Kemp

Sir, Whilst I agree with the sentiment expressed by Victor Black (letter, March 26) regarding military action to constrain aggression, his historical analogy with the Saar in 1935 is both inapplicable and inaccurate.

The Saar was placed under international control at the end of the First World War with an agreement to hold a plebiscite on its future status 15 years later. This plebiscite was duly conducted in 1935. The result was a 90.8 per cent vote for reunion with Germany. The territory was not, therefore, annexed by Hitler.

The ethnic composition of the Saar was and is over 95 per cent German, whereas the ethnic composition of Kosovo today is about 90 per cent Albanian.

Yours faithfully,
MIKE KEMP,
3 Ashburnham Park,
Esher, Surrey KT10 9TW,
March 26.

From Mr Dave Hepworth

Sir, Isn't it unspeakably depressing that, on the brink of the third millennium, we are still resorting to the methods of the first in attempting to solve political problems through force of arms? Only our capacity for destruction seems to have developed significantly in the intervening period.

Yours faithfully,
DAVE HEPWORTH,
Wayside, Miles Lane,
Rowland, Bakeswell DE45 1NP,
March 30.

Care of young offenders

From the Director of the Prison Reform Trust

Sir, Coincidentally, the Prison Reform Trust and the independent Inspectorate of Prisons were both established at the same time nearly 20 years ago, and I have therefore had the doubtful, and perhaps unique, privilege of reading every single report issued by successive chief inspectors. I can think of none which has revealed such impoverished treatment as that just issued by Sir David Ramsbottom on Feltham Young Offender Institution (report, March 26).

Feltham offers a Dickensian vision of filth and neglect, a corrupting establishment which seems to have been designed to confirm the criminality of the youngsters in its charge. With almost 1,000 places, it necessarily contains prisoners far from their homes and is quite unable to provide individual care and treatment.

The announcement that the Prison Service is seeking alternative accommodation for some of Feltham's young offenders, many of them little more than children, is welcome but does not go far enough. Looking after young delinquents should be no business of the Prison Service. Most domestic and international legislation now acknowledges that adulthood begins at the 18th birthday. Prisons should be subject to the same principle.

Yours faithfully,
STEPHEN SHAW,
Director,
Prison Reform Trust,
Second Floor,
15 Northburgh Street, EC1V 0JR,
March 26.

Speed traps

From Mr R. J. Butler

Sir, You do not normally give the addresses of organisations that encourage lawbreaking. Today you have done so by giving the Internet addresses of two organisations that arguably encourage motorists to give details of the location of speed cameras and by the publication of a registry of speed traps (report, March 24).

Yours sincerely,
R. J. BUTLER,
29 Villa Road,
Bingley, West Yorkshire BD16 4EU,
March 24.

Business letters, page 29

Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046.
e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

Priorities for Commission reform

From Mr W. H. Henderson

Sir, Perhaps one of the first reforms of the European Commission (letters, March 17, 19, 20, 24 and 27) should be to abolish the title of President. The Commission is a bureaucracy operating under the aegis of the Council of Ministers. As such its top man should more appropriately be designated as Director-General, or even Chief Clerk.

This would reduce the risk of falling into the delusion, as Mr Santer seemed to do, that the office is in some way the Presidency of Europe, and would make it clear that the Commission is the servant of the people, not its master.

Yours truly,
W. H. HENDERSON,
Quarry House,
Charlton Horethorne,
Sherborne, Dorset DT9 4NY,
March 29.

From Mrs Juliet Campbell

Sir, The British media have not been fair to Jacques Santer in their coverage of the Middlebrook Report and the Commission's subsequent resignation.

There are unreal assumptions about the power of the President of the Commission to bring to heel colleagues whom he does not appoint and cannot sack, and who have the backing of their respective governments. Nor can Jacques Santer's authority have been strengthened by the manner of his appointment, as a surprise fallback candidate after other nominations had been blocked by different member states.

Many, though not all, of the criticisms now being made have their origins in earlier periods. Most of the fraud regularly reported by the Court of Auditors has taken place within the

jurisdiction of member states, not the Community institutions. Santer, who inherited a Commission characterised by cronyism and weak managerial structures, set himself on appointment the task of making the Commission more efficient and less corrupt, set up an internal anti-fraud unit, and established codes of conduct for commissioners and his staff. His main fault has been failure to change a long-established culture.

During my time in Luxembourg I came to know Prime Minister Santer, as he then was, quite well and to respect him. I am sorry that he should have become the latest victim of our media's thirst for a weekly scapegoat.

Yours faithfully,
JULIET CAMPBELL,
(British Ambassador to
Luxembourg, 1988-91),
3 Belbroughton Road,
Oxford OX2 6UZ,
March 23.

From the Chairman of the UK Independence Party

Sir, The assertion by a Conservative Party spokesman (report, early editions, March 26) that a recent MORI poll on the European election, showing that this party could win 25 per cent of the vote, was "rigged" and "says nothing about elections" is both complacent and ludicrous.

The truth is that the UKIP says what many politicians secretly think and what a huge section of the British public wants — withdrawal from the EU.

Yours faithfully,
NIGEL FARAGE,
Chairman,
UK Independence Party,
Triumph House,
189 Regent Street, W1R 7WF,
March 26.

Scottish ceremonial

From Mr John York

Sir, I am dismayed to read (report, March 19) that government ministers have advised that the opening of the Scottish parliament should be a "civic celebration" for ordinary people, relatively free from pomp. What does this mean? This is, after all, a great state occasion and the best way for ordinary people to celebrate it would be to declare a national holiday in Scotland and allow the people to observe an expression of Scottish pride. The Queen is Queen of Scotland and there are many Scottish traditional aspects which could be

displayed. The Lord Lyon King of Arms, the head of the independent Scottish heralds, could devise a truly magnificent piece of ceremonial suitable for the occasion, in the same way that the heralds in England under the Earl Marshal do.

Who said that ordinary people do not want a splash of colour and a grand occasion? I detect a number of agendas working behind the scene which are quite out of step with popular opinion.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN YORK,
26 Ashwell Avenue,
Camberley, Surrey GU15 2AR,
March 20.

Two Houses or Commons only?

From Mr Richard A. Edwards

Sir, Peter Riddell is quite right to suggest that the House of Lords needs bold reform (article, March 29). However, the hybrid chamber which he seems to favour is far from that. Allowing even a third of a new Upper House to be constituted by executive patronage can hardly be said to be a triumph for either democracy or radical reform.

Instead a truly radical blueprint would be based on the triple "e" formula. That is a chamber which is elected, equal and effective. There is no reason why a new chamber cannot be directly elected in its entirety, like the Australian Senate. There, a system of PR has brought independents and minority parties such as the Greens into the Federal Parliament. Indeed, they have often held the balance of power in the Senate. Moreover, an elected Senate has not detracted from the authority of House of Representatives, which remains primarily the house of government.

Equally, the new chamber should be composed of an equal number of representatives from the English regions and the Home Nations.

Finally, a new chamber must enjoy effective powers. In practice this means that, with the exception of money Bills, the Upper House should enjoy equal power with the Commons over all proposed laws. Vesting a power of veto in the Upper House is after all the *raison d'être* of bicameralism.

Yours etc,
RICHARD A. EDWARDS,
Law Faculty, Southampton Institute,
East Park Terrace,
Southampton SO14 0YN,
richard.edwards@soli.ac.uk
March 29.

From Mr Grant Woodruff

Sir, In his perspicacious article on reforming the second chamber, Peter Riddell writes that we have, in effect, a unicameral system. Checks and balances on the Commons are clearly needed but could they not better be provided without the burden of a contorted body such as a new House of Lords?

New Zealand has a unicameral system and any shortcomings identified there could be compensated for in some of our existing bodies. For example, the select committee structure could be further strengthened and we could give certain tasks, such as a veto over the postponement of a general election, to the Privy Council.

Yours sincerely,
GRANT WOODRUFF,
Heatherlands, Naphill Common,
High Wycombe HP14 4RF,
grant.woodruff@btinternet.com
March 29.

Press awards

From Miss Carol Sarler

Sir, Writing as a judge of last week's press awards, Brian MacArthur (Media, March 26) asks whether it was "fair" to have pitched the losing tabloid critics Charles Catchpole of *The Mirror*, and Jaci Stephen of the *Daily Mail*, against "the wit" of *The Daily Telegraph's* Charles Spencer, "the sustained cleverness" of *The Sunday Times's* A. A. Gill or, heaven help us, "the high seriousness" of Blake Morrison in the *Independent* on Sunday.

Of course it was fair; it was just the judging that was not. Mr Catchpole and Miss Stephen should not have been assessed in a competition of erudition (let alone one of shoving off). The only criterion the judges should have used was which of the nominees best served their particular, defined readership.

Truist critic is the one who proves himself to be first, and last, on his readers' side.

Nobody knew that better than the late Jack Tinker of the *Daily Mail* in whose name the award is given. Jack, as it happens, was a huge fan of both Catchpole and Stephen; if celestial votes were allowed, I'll wager the result would have been different.

Yours etc,
CAROL SARLER,
35 Upper Tolleridge Park, N4 3EJ,
March 26.

From Dr Andrew Severn

Sir, Our local Nuffield hospital recently asked the opinion of the nursing staff about the renaming of its two wards.

Local beauty spots and historic monuments were predictable choices, but the obvious winner in my view is the choice of one of the theatre nursing staff who suggested "Morecambe" and "Wise".

Yours faithfully,
ANDREW M. SEVERN,
Lane Head House,
Main Road, Bolton-le-Sands,
Lancashire LA5 8DN,
March 28.

From Mr R. F. Flint

Sir, When the euro eventually achieves parity with the dollar will it then be known as the *douleu*?

Yours sincerely,
RAY FLINT,
20 Hillside, SW19 4NL,
March 30.

COURT CIRCULAR

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
March 30: The Princess Royal, Colonel, The Blues and Royals, was received by The Queen upon her appointment as Gold Stick and received from Her Majesty the Stick of Office.

Mrs Christian Adams has succeeded The Lady Eton as Lady in Waiting to The Queen.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
March 30: The Duke of Edinburgh, Royal Governor, this morning visited Sutton's Hospital in Charterhouse, London, ECI.

His Royal Highness, Honorary Life Member, today attended a Lunch at The Arts Club, 40 Dover Street, London, W1.

The Duke of Edinburgh, Honorary Fellow, this evening attended the Royal College of Radiologists' X Appeal concert and Dinner at St James's Palace.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
March 30: The Duke of York, Patron, inaugurated a new field ambulance for the Commonwealth Society for the Deaf at Buckingham Palace.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
March 30: The Prince Edward, Chairman, International Council, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, this morning held a meeting for the Congressional Award of the United States of America, at Buckingham Palace.

His Royal Highness, Trustee, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, today gave a lunch at Buckingham Palace.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
March 30: The Princess Royal, President, Animal Health Trust, this morning unveiled a sculpture of the racehorse Lord Cyllene, at

Lawrence Park, Kentford, Newmarket, Suffolk, and was received by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk (The Lord Belstead).

Her Royal Highness this afternoon gave a Lunch for The Royal Veterinary College at Buckingham Palace.

ST JAMES'S PALACE
March 30: The Duke of Kent this morning formally opened the Scotland 1999 Exhibition.

His Royal Highness then visited West of Scotland Science Park, Kelvin Campus, Millhill Road, Glasgow.

The Duke of Kent afterwards visited Microase Optical Systems at Unit 3, West of Scotland Science Park.

The Duke of Kent this afternoon attended a lunch at the Lord Provost's Office to meet representatives of The Glasgow Export Partnership and of Glasgow companies engaged in the export markets.

THATCHED HOUSE LODGE, RICHMOND PARK
March 30: Princess Alexandra this afternoon visited the General Dental Council at 37 Wimpole Street, London.

Her Royal Highness, Patron of the Central School of Speech and Drama, Harborne, upon retiring as Chairman of the Governors and Mr Brian Goodson on assuming the appointment.

Princess Alexandra, Patron, subsequently received Sir John Hanson, Chairman of the Trustees of the British Skin Foundation.

Royal engagements

The Duke of Edinburgh, as patron and trustee, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, will attend receptions for young people who have reached the gold standard at St James's Palace at 11.30 and 4.00. Later, as patron, will attend a sculpture Unbound Bound Trust dinner at Buckingham Palace at 7.40.

The Prince of Wales will visit McLaren International, Albert Drive, Woking, at 10.30; will visit The Prince's Trust Youth Bus, Town Square, Woking, at 11.35; and Surrey History Centre, 130 Golders Road, Woking, at 11.55; will visit Beacon Centre, Royal Surrey County Hospital, Guildford, at 1.15; and St Peter's centre for children and young people with epilepsy, St Peter's Lane, Liphigat, at 2.40; and as patron, Welsh National Opera, will attend a performance of *Hansel and Gretel* at Sadler's Wells Theatre, at 7.05.

Helen de Freitas

A memorial service for Helen de Freitas will be held on Saturday, May 15, at 11.00am, at the Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ, 615 W Wellington, Chicago 60657, USA. All enquiries 0171-435 0532.

Lecture

Leverhulme Memorial Lecture Professor Sir Martin Rees, FRS, Astronomer Royal, yesterday delivered the Leverhulme Memorial Lecture, entitled: "Our universe and others: 15 billion years of cosmic evolution" at the University of Liverpool. Professor Rees, the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liverpool, and the Leverhulme Trustees attended a dinner held afterwards.

Institute of Biology

The following have been elected as Fellows and may use the designation F.R.S. or F.R.B.S. Dr P. R. Beck-Sandeman, Professor M. R. Dando, Professor R. A. Dack, Mr O. J. Evers, Dr D. J. Galloway, Mr J. A. Green, Dr A. R. Jones, Dr M. D. Lacey, Dr N. A. Roberts, Professor P. J. Schmitt, Dr G. B. S. Turner, Professor C. M. Thomas, Professor A. F. Turner. Call 0171 833 333 ext 230 for information on Fellowship.

Appointment

Mr Tony Smith has been appointed High Commissioner to Jamaica from July in succession to Mr Richard Thomas who will be retiring from the Diplomatic Service.



Philip Park, restoration project engineer, stands in front of the "Cathedral of the Industrial Revolution"

£3m grant to restore giant boat lift

By RUSSELL JENKINS

THE Anderson Boat Lift, one of the Victorians' most magnificent and eccentric feats of industrial engineering, is to be restored to its original working order.

The iron structure raised or lowered barges by a complex hydraulic system to link the Trent and Mersey Canal with the River Weaver, near Northwich, in Cheshire, 50ft below.

When it was built in 1875 by Edwin Clark, it was the first of its kind anywhere in the world and revered as a testimony of the ingenuity and sheer daring of 19th-century engineers.

British Waterways, which describes the lift as a cathedral of the Industrial Revolution, yesterday announced a National Lottery grant of £3.3 million towards the £7 million restoration costs. Derek Cochrane, British Waterways regional director, said: "There is no doubt that the Anderson Boat Lift is a monument of international significance. When built it was the biggest step in water transport since the building of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct 70 years earlier. Later boat lifts in Belgium and France copied Anderson but its design was never bettered."

To the observer the lift looks like an early North Sea oil rig rising from the riverbank. On the opposite bank the Brunner Mond chemical plant completes the industrial landscape.

In the last century, the canal carried coal barges from St Helens to the deep rock salt mines in Northwich. Salt was then shipped by canal to Liverpool, Manchester and the world.

Although the river almost touches the canal, boatmen had to add another three to four days to their journey, travelling via the Manchester Ship Canal to reach the mines.

Clark devised an hydraulic lift fed by an aqueduct. Boats were loaded into water-filled caissons which were raised or lowered by a delicate balancing system. Water was pumped into the upper tank causing it to descend, pulling the lower tank up with it.

The system worked perfectly until 1908 when corrosion, caused by the oversaturated water, made it temperamental. Within weeks, the Weaver Navigation Trustees had devised and built an electrical system to take the strain; this Heath Robinsonesque system kept it going until 1933.

One canal enthusiast, who travelled on the lift before its closure, said: "It squeaked and creaked and water dripped on your head. Brown water; I might add."

Philip Park, the restoration project engineer, said that when they came to inspect the structure, they found that the electrical gear had disappeared but the cages for the workmen's ferrets were still there.

As he moves into the final design stage, Mr Park hopes to be able to restore almost all the original ironwork but the aqueduct will need 15,000 new rivets before taking a 70ft narrow boat.

He said: "I feel deep envy towards those who built the original lift because they took such a risk. It was highly entrepreneurial and one hell of a leap for the technology."

The first paying passengers in 1875 were charged one shilling for a laden barge plus a penny per ton. Pleasure boats will be charged £27.50 each when the project is completed in several years' time.

Toni Bennett, the funding manager, said that the £3.3 million grant was vital to secure the project. So far British Waterways, Vale Royal Borough Council, English Heritage and various businesses have contributed another £2.3 million, leaving £1 million to find.

Mike Cookley, chairman of the Friends of Anderson Boat Lift, said that the restoration is a crucial first step to plans to attract tourists to the area that includes the Lion Salt Works and the picturesque village of Great Budworth.

Mr Park, who is based at the Brunner Mond chemical plant, said that the restoration project was a "cathedral of the Industrial Revolution".

Church news

New Archdeacon of Newark

The Rev Nigel Peyton, Vicar, Lambly (Southwell), to be the new Archdeacon of Newark in succession to Archdeacon David Hain.

Appointments

The Rev Paul Adamson, Team Vicar, North Tyneside and Redcliffe, and Word Development Co-ordinator, and Rural Dean of Bellingham (Newcastle), to be Team Rector, same benefice.

The Rev Matthew Baynes, Vicar, Cosely Christ Church (Worcester), to be Rector, Bredon.

Bredon's Norton (same diocese).

The Rev Simon Chesters, Curate, Bidston (Chester), to be Priest-in-Charge, Runcorn, Warrington, and Director of Reader Training (same diocese).

The Rev John Chidham, CMS, Lebanon, to be Team Vicar, Worthing Christ the King with special responsibility for St Matthew (Chichester).

The Rev Alastair Coles, Assistant Curate, Wymondham, W. Spenser Row (Norwich), to be Minor Canon of St Paul's Cathedral (London).

The Rev Jeffrey Camell, Writer and Broadcaster, Religious Programmes, BBC Radio Stoke, to be Rector, Arbury and Smallwood (Chester).

The Rev Audrey Elkington, Canon, Prudhoe (Newcastle), to be Rector, Arbury and Smallwood (Chester).

The Rev David Elkington, Priest-in-Charge, Prudhoe (Newcastle), to be Vicar, same benefice.

The Rev Ian Forrester, Chaplain, Lancing College, to be Priest-in-Charge, Boxgrove (Chichester).

The Rev Phil Goodey, Curate, St Andrew's Church, Chichester, to be Priest-in-Charge, Wickham Market, Peckham, St Peter and St Paul (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich).

The Rev Peter Grayson, Team Vicar, Cannock with special responsibility for Heath Hayes (Lichfield), to be Vicar, Rostree and Crodon w. Hollington (same diocese).

Canon Murray Haig, Priest-in-Charge, Alnwick St Michael and St Paul (Newcastle), to be Vicar, same benefice.

The Rev Ian Forrester, Chaplain, Lancing College, to be Priest-in-Charge, Boxgrove (Chichester).

Memorial service

Mr Adrian Ryan
A service of thanksgiving for the life and work of Mr Adrian Ryan, painter, writer and art teacher, was held yesterday at St James's, Piccadilly. The Rev Mary Robins officiated.

Mrs Scarlett Pears, daughter, read *Disobedience* by A.A. Milne, and Mr John Norris-Wood read *Afterwards* by Thomas Hardy. Chris Kelly read from Adrian Ryan's *Painting in France*. Mr Guy Rodden, Mr Julian Machin and Miss Frances Pyfield paid tribute. Among other present were:

Mrs Adrian Ryan (widow), Mrs Caroline Pears and Miss Vivienne Ryan (daughters), Mr Ben Homeny representing the President of the Association of Artists' Parents, other members of the family, friends, fellow artists and former students.

Airey Neave

The Speaker attended a service held yesterday in the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft, Palace of Westminster, to commemorate the life and work of Airey Neave, who died March 30, 1979. The Rev Robert Wright, Chaplain to the Speaker, officiated. Mr John Giffard, nephew, read the lesson; and Mr Edward Webb, grandson, read *Out of Step in Under den Linden*, from his grandfather's *Nuremberg*. Lord Mayhew of Twickenham, QC, President of the Airey Neave Trust, gave an address. Baroness Thatcher, LG, OM, FRS and Sir Denis Thatcher, the Ambassador of the Republic of Ireland, the Leader of HM Opposition, members of the family, Members of both Houses of Parliament and members of the Airey Neave Trust were among those present.

Birthdays today

The Marquess of Ailesbury, 73; Professor Patrick Bateson, FRS, Provost, Kings College, Cambridge, 61; Mr Richard Chamberlain, actor, 64; Mr Robbie Coltrane, actor and director, 49; Sir Roger Cook, former Lord Mayor of London, 82; Mr John Cowley, writer, 73; Sir John James, former Secretary and Keeper of the Records, Duchy of Cornwall, 64; Sir John Kemp-Welch, chairman, Stock Exchange, 63; Sir Paul Lever, diplomat, 55; Sir Peter Lowry, former chairman, Acad, 79; The Rev Sir Derek Paulson, former secretary-general, General Synod of the Church of England, 69; The Right Rev John Roberts, former Abbot of Downside, 80; Mrs Daphne Robertson, Sheriff of Lichfield and Borders at Edinburgh, 62; Lord Rollo, 56; The Earl of Rosslyn, 41; Professor Dame Sheila Sherlock, gastro-enterologist, 81; Sir Derek Spencer, QC, 63; Lord Steel of Aikwood, 61; Lord Trevelyan, 58; Professor Sir Frederick Warner, FRS, chemical engineer, 88; Mr Sidney Weighell, trade unionist, 77; Mr Nicholas Winterton, MP, 61.

Dinner

Foundation for Science and Technology
Lord Jenkin of Roding, Chairman of the Council of the Foundation for Science and Technology, presided at a dinner discussion held last night at the Royal Society. The Earl of Selborne, FRS, Professor Burton Richter and Professor Julia Goodfellow were the speakers.

Forthcoming marriages

Mr S.R. Clark and Miss C.S. Boyd
The engagement is announced between Simon, younger son of Mr and Mrs Rollo Clark of Billerica, Essex, and Claire, daughter of Mr and Mrs Don Boyd, of Kensington, London.

Mr E. Cree and Miss A. Fankler
The engagement is announced between Edward, younger son of Mr and Mrs David Cree, of Swainthorpe, Norfolk, and Ailsa, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs Derek Faulkner, of Weston Hills, Lincolnshire.

Mr O.C.C. Hunter and Miss N.L. Robins-Walker
The engagement is announced between Oliver Charles Cassels, elder son of Mr and Mrs Donald Hunter, of Hill House, Hampton Lucy, Warwick, and Nicola Louise, elder daughter of Mrs Sheila Walker and the late Mr John Robins, and stepdaughter of Mr John Walker, of Mendip View, Tarnock, Somerset.

Mr H.W. Jackson and Miss S.K. Cottam
The engagement is announced between Hugo, son of the late Peter Jackson and of Mrs Sarah Jackson, of County Tipperary, Ireland, and Sadie, daughter of Mr David Cottam, of Hong Kong, and Ms Isabella Bourgeois, of New York.

Mr D.G. Stern and Miss P.H. Hamilton-Ely
The engagement is announced between David Stern, of Badnall, Staffordshire, and Penny Hamilton-Ely, of Fulham, London.

Anniversaries today

BIRTHS: René Descartes, philosopher, La Haye, France, 1596; John Harrison, horologist and inventor of the marine chronometer, Foulby, near Pontefract, 1693; Franz Joseph Haydn, composer, Rohrau, Austria, 1732; Nikolai Gogol, novelist and dramatist, 1809; Edward Fitzgerald, translator of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Bedford, Suffolk, 1809; Robert Bunsen, chemist, Göttingen, Germany, 1811; John La Ruge, mural painter, New York, 1835; Andrew Lang, writer and collector of folk tales, 1844; Rodney (Cyprian) Smith, evangelist, near Epping, Essex, 1850; Arthur Griffith, Irish statesman, Dublin, 1872; Jack Johnson, boxing champion, Galveston, Texas, 1878.

DEATHS: John Donne, poet, Dean of St Paul's 1621-31, London, 1631; John Constable, painter, London, 1837; Charlotte Brontë, writer, Harworth, Yorkshire, 1855; Lady Charlotte Bury, novelist, London, 1861; John Pierpont Morgan, financier, Rome, 1913; Emil von Behring, bacteriologist, Nobel laureate 1901, Marburg, Germany, 1917; Medardo Rosso, sculptor, Milan, 1928; Jesse Owens, athlete, Tucson, Arizona, 1980.

Napoleon abdicated, 1814.

The Eiffel Tower was inaugurated, 1889.

The Church in Wales was disestablished, 1920.

The Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl published an English translation of his account of the Kon-Tiki expedition, 1950.

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PERSONAL COLUMN

TRADE: 0171 481 1982
FAX: 0171 481 9313

DEATHS

BARNETT - Colonel
Christopher Malcolm OBE (late 1st and 2nd Bn The Buffs) and RRF on March 25th at home aged 72 years. From a distinguished military career. Much loved father of Julia, Hugh, Robert and Tessa and grandfather of Antonia, Victoria, Joe, Humphrey and Lucia. Funeral private. No flowers. If desired donations to The Royal Star and Garter Home, Richmond TW10 5BR.

BIRTHS

BERRY - On 28th March, to Emma (née Tracy) and Chris, a son, Henry (Harry) William John, a brother for Oliver, Alice and George.

BRAMWELL - On March 26th, 1999 to Jessica (née Roberts) and David, a daughter, Alexandra Meg (Alicia), a half sister for Katharine.

CORN - On March 24th at The Portland Hospital, to Sophie (née Hartnell) and George, a daughter, Alicia Jeremia Margaret.

FORGE - On March 22nd, to Iona and Oliver, a son.

GILL - On Friday 19th March 1999 at 12 o'clock to Karen and Martin, a son, Oliver Martin, a brother for Emily and Kasia.

MACHING - On February 29th 1999 to Emily (née Smith) and Stephen, twins Crispin Dominic Forbes and Cosima Ivy Augusta.

HARMAN - On Friday March 26th 1999, to Anne (née Lockett) and Neil, a son, Marcus Jeffrey, a brother for Jessica.

JOHNSON - On March 21st 1999 at Frimley Park Hospital, to Linda (née Nevel) and Simon, a son, Zachariah Charles Bruce.

MAEDA - On March 28th at The Portland Hospital, to Yoko (née Imai) and Naoto, a son, Etsuke.

MEEKIN - On March 27th at The Chobles and Westminster Hospital to Kate (née Allott) and Will, a beautiful daughter, Alice.

PEZE - On March 24th at The Portland Hospital, to Valerie and Jerome, a son, Hector, a brother for Marguerite, Eugenie and Colombina.

RICHARD - On March 27th, to Jane (née Vennart) and Martin, a son, George William, a brother for Thomas.

TIMBERLAKE - On March 25th, to Maria (née Watts) and Dominic, a daughter, Amelia Maria Ellen.

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FORGE - On March 22nd, to Iona and Oliver, a son.

GILL - On Friday 19th March 1999 at 12 o'clock to Karen and Martin, a son, Oliver Martin, a brother for Emily and Kasia.

MACHING - On February 29th 1999 to Emily (née Smith) and Stephen, twins Crispin Dominic Forbes and Cosima Ivy Augusta.

HARMAN - On Friday March 26th 1999, to Anne (née Lockett) and Neil, a son, Marcus Jeffrey, a brother for Jessica.

JOHNSON - On March 21st 1999 at Frimley Park Hospital, to Linda (née Nevel) and Simon, a son, Zachariah Charles Bruce.

MAEDA - On March 28th at The Portland Hospital, to Yoko (née Imai) and Naoto, a son, Etsuke.

MEEKIN - On March 27th at The Chobles and Westminster Hospital to Kate (née Allott) and Will, a beautiful daughter, Alice.

PEZE - On March 24th at The Portland Hospital, to Valerie and Jerome, a son, Hector, a brother for Marguerite, Eugenie and Colombina.

RICHARD - On March 27th, to Jane (née Vennart) and Martin, a son, George William, a brother for Thomas.

TIMBERLAKE - On March 25th, to Maria (née Watts) and Dominic, a daughter, Amelia Maria Ellen.

DEATHS

BARNETT - Colonel
Christopher Malcolm OBE (late 1st and 2nd Bn The Buffs) and RRF on March 25th at home aged 72 years. From a distinguished military career. Much loved father of Julia, Hugh, Robert and Tessa and grandfather of Antonia, Victoria, Joe, Humphrey and Lucia. Funeral private. No flowers. If desired donations to The Royal Star and Garter Home, Richmond TW10 5BR.

BIRTHS

BERRY - On 28th March, to Emma (née Tracy) and Chris, a son, Henry (Harry) William John, a brother for Oliver, Alice and George.

BRAMWELL - On March 26th, 1999 to Jessica (née Roberts) and David, a daughter, Alexandra Meg (Alicia), a half sister for Katharine.

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OBITUARIES

CAPTAIN JEREMY ELWES

Captain Jeremy Elwes, former High Sheriff of Lincolnshire, died on February 22 aged 77. He was born on September 1, 1921.

JEREMY ELWES played a prominent part in the public life of Humberside and north Lincolnshire for half a century. A wartime member of the SAS known locally as "the Captain", he fought for so many causes and with such zeal that his family affectionately dubbed him "Don Quixote". But whereas Cervantes's knight tilted at windmills, Elwes fought to save them — along with other examples of his country's past. The Lincolnshire Arts and Heritage Association was among the organisations he helped to create, and he was a great advocate of local craftsmanship. He became High Sheriff of Lincolnshire in 1969 and a Deputy Lieutenant, before becoming Vice-Lord-Lieutenant of Humberside in 1983.

agent into Yugoslavia. But the operation was cancelled and he spent the rest of the war on intelligence and propaganda work around the Balkans. He was mentioned in dispatches after another deception exercise. In which an enemy ferry off Albania was fooled into mistaking a small launch for a British destroyer — and surrendered in consequence.

After the war Elwes was offered a Foreign Office post in Shanghai, but turned it down when he inherited the Lincolnshire estates. After a course at Moulton Agricultural College, he decided to settle down to life as a farmer in 1949. But he was not a man to settle. Soon two secretaries had to be employed to cope with his burgeoning interests — including Radio Humberside, setting up a chair of environmental medicine at Surrey University, working for the Conservatives and with the sick at Lourdes.



to his heart in later years was the Shirevally Association, which he helped to found in 1971. Its purpose is to preserve the ancient office of High Sheriff (then under threat) by endowing it with fresh responsibilities in each county, and to support law and order and the monarchy. As the organisation grew to number nearly 1,000 sheriffs of various kinds throughout the world, Elwes acquired a new sobriquet as "the sheriffs' shop steward". He stood down in 1992, a thousand years exactly after the establishment of the office of sheriff.

Not all his multifarious ideas flourished. One disappointment was his failure in 1980 to persuade the UN to hold an International Country Year. Rejected he admitted that some of his schemes were "hare-brained", but friends prefer to say that he was ahead of his time.

Elwes, who painted for his own enjoyment, was a big man in all senses who never lost his enthusiasm — or his faith. He rarely missed the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes. He is survived by his wife Clare — his Sancho Panza — and their four sons.

JOE WILLIAMS

Joe Williams, American jazz singer, was found dead in Las Vegas on March 29 aged 80. He was born on December 12, 1918.

A combination of visceral blues power and impeccable diction carried Joe Williams to a pre-eminent position among male jazz singers. A pivotal figure in the rebirth of the Count Basie legend in the 1950s, he was for ever associated with the hit version of the Memphis Slim classic *Every Day I Have the Blues*. Well into his seventies — his tall, imperious figure crowned by neatly trimmed grey hair — Williams could still be heard blasting out the song in his robust bass-baritone at festivals across the world. Yet his performances also revealed a less familiar talent as a mellifluous interpreter of ballads.

Though he never attained the heart-throb status of Billie Holiday, he was every bit as much at ease with romantic material. Although his full-time stint with Basie lasted only from 1954 to 1961, Williams continued to work with the orchestra as a guest singer during the remainder of his career. Often described as the Count's "No 1 Son", he initially won him over by "sitting in" with the bandleader's small group at a Chicago club in 1950. Four years later, during another of Basie's visits to the city, Williams made another unscheduled appearance and was promptly signed up.

Williams, whose baptismal name was Joseph Goreed, was born in Cordale, Georgia. He was raised by his mother and grandmother and given the surname Williams when he was 16, more than a decade after his family had joined the great black exodus north to Chicago. He began singing in church and after dropping out of high school gained experience performing in a whites-only club, all the while absorbing the influences of vocalists as diverse as Ethel Waters and the young Perry Como.

In 1937 Williams joined the clarinetist Jimmie Noone, and later he made appearances with Coleman Hawkins and Andy Kirk. By his own account his career almost came to a premature end in the mid-1940s when he suffered a nervous breakdown and underwent electric shock treatment in hospital.

Castling around for a new direction, he took up selling cosmetics while taking occasional singing engagements. But after working with the visiting pianist George Shearing, Williams returned to rousic permanently.



Joe Williams on stage at the time of his tour of England with Count Basie in the late 1950s

and soon afterwards he landed his first impromptu appearance with Basie.

The immediate postwar years had not been kind to Basie. Thanks in part to wartime entertainment taxes, big bands had become an economic burden, with the swing era slowly winding down, singers had moved into the limelight. At the start of the 1950s Basie had been reduced to running an orchestra.

By the time Williams became a permanent member, the pianist's fortunes had recovered enough to allow him to take a 16-piece line-up on the road. Williams, like the singer Jimmy Rushing before him, blended perfectly into the sleek formula of blues and pop standards. He had already enjoyed success with a version of *Every Day*, but the arrangement recorded with Basie in 1955 signalled a new phase in the long history of the orchestra.

The song was featured on the popular album *Count Basie Swings*, *Joe Williams Sings*. As Basie's fortunes rose, so did Williams. Though some critics complained that the new orchestra had lost some of the spontaneity of the prewar unit, its merits

have since won greater recognition. "We had our hits, but the main thing was, it was a very lifting experience being with that band," Williams later recalled in a profile by *The New Yorker's* Whitney Balliet. "It was made up of men who took great pride in getting their music right. It was a matter of self-discipline and group discipline. If someone got out of line, we didn't go to Basie. We straightened him out ourselves. We were treated like artists, so we tried to act like artists. Basie was very quiet, but he observed a lot. In a way, he ran the band by letting it alone."

Williams struck out on his own in 1961. Along with Basie he had earlier found a niche at Roulette Records, whose notorious owner, Morris Levy, was renowned for his dubious accounting techniques and alleged connections with organised crime. Looking back ruefully in a magazine article published earlier this year, Williams observed that Levy was, as he put it, "very creative." "I always managed to owe him \$80,000."

Williams, who went on to record for

a variety of major labels, was seldom short of work in the decades that followed. He made some acclaimed albums for Verve, including the disc *Live at Vine Street*, and his mid-Sixties work for RCA was reissued under the apt title *The Overwhelming Joe Williams*. The bandleader took precedence over the blues shouter in a guest appearance on Cleo Laine's 1994 album *Blue and Sentimental*. Williams's gossamer vocals on Irving Berlin's song *What'll I Do* were a match for any crooner's.

Having sung in a gospel quartet in his youth, he returned to his church roots late in life with a collection of spirituals entitled *Feel the Spirit*. By this time he had reached an entirely different audience through his role as Grandpa Al on the hugely popular television situation comedy *The Cosby Show*.

With his fourth wife, the English-born Jillian Milne, Williams settled in Las Vegas, finding time for rounds of golf between his many engagements. Apart from his widow, he leaves a son and a daughter.

GROUP CAPTAIN PETER JOHNSON

Group Captain Peter Johnson, DSO, OBE, DFC, AFC, wartime bomber pilot, died on February 12 aged 90. He was born on November 13, 1908.

A MUCH-DECORATED airman with vast experience of bombing operations over Germany, Peter Johnson came in later life to doubt the value of the strategic weapon of which he and his squadrons had

been a part. His last book, *The Withered Garland*, published in 1995 when he was 87, was a graphic description of the life of aircrew in Bomber Command, but it also gave vent to some sceptical second thoughts about the effectiveness of the "area" offensive against German cities. Johnson came to the conclusion that the bombing had done little to destroy German war production or morale, and had

diverted resources from the precision bombing of industrial targets.

Few senior officers, even retired ones, can have had the experience of having a book reviewed in the communist newspaper *Morning Star*. The paper gave ample coverage to an earlier book of Johnson's, *Neutrality: A Policy for Britain*, when it appeared in 1982. In that book he argued that Britain would be better off outside Nato, and should stop trying to act like a major power in world conflicts. He also felt that at that time the Soviet Union was no longer a threat and that Britain's close links with the United States were contrary to its own interests.

But although applauded by CND for these views, Johnson made it clear that he was not in the unilateral nuclear disarmament camp. He thought Britain might dispense with her submarine-launched intercontinental missiles, but was in favour of retaining battlefield nuclear weapons.

Peter Warren Johnson was the son of a Royal Navy captain who lost his leg in HMS Cressy in the first major naval disaster of the First World War. He was one of 1,400 men who perished when three old cruisers, *Aboukir*, *Hogue* and *Cressy*, were sunk in the course of a few hours by a single submarine on September 21, 1914.

Peter Johnson, too, was destined for the Navy and went to Dartmouth, an experience which bred in him a rooted and lifelong dislike for the sea. Leaving Dartmouth, he had a short spell on the London Stock Exchange before going out to Australia to try his hand at sheep farming.

But he found his métier when he joined the RAF in 1930 on a short service commission. A natural pilot, he passed out of his intake at the Central Flying School and saw prewar service — a wary watching brief over the Italian invasion of Abyssinia — in the Horn of Africa.

The first three years of his war were spent in Training Command (at over 30 he was thought to be too old for operations) and he wrote the RAF's first syllabus for instrument-flying training. But in 1943, with aircrew losses mounting alarmingly, he transferred to Bomber Command and was given his first squadron, No 49. He won his DSO for his leadership during the RAF's heavy raid on the V2 test site at Peenemünde in August, and the following month was appointed station commander at Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, where, in the early months of 1944, one of the squadrons under his care was the famous 617 (Dambusters), then commanded by Leonard Cheshire.

Subsequently he commanded a Pathfinder squadron in 5 Group. It was when he was sent to Germany by "Bomber

Harris to survey bomb damage at the end of the war that he began to have his doubts about the value of what had been done, but it was to be many more years before he set these down on paper.

In 1946 he retired from the RAF and joined the Ministry of Civil Aviation. From 1947 he was seconded to the Allied Control Commission, Germany, and for the next eight years was responsible for the development of civil aviation in the country. This involved him in requisitioning civil aircraft during the Berlin Airlift, and he was also instrumental in the resurrection of Lufthansa, Germany's national flag carrier. For this he was appointed OBE.

In retirement he remained mentally active, taking an economics degree at LSE and a degree in European history at the Open University. He was a regular contributor to *The New European* and wrote *The Hinge of Opportunity: A Security System for Europe*.

In his later years he became a trustee of the Dresden Trust in Britain, whose purpose is to raise money for the city's Frauenkirche. This magnificent domed church collapsed in the aftermath of the Dresden fire raid of February 13-14, 1945 (miraculously it had stood the intense heat of the firestorm itself), and is being painstakingly rebuilt. Johnson had not flown on the Dresden raid himself, but regarded the British contribution to the German reconstruction effort as a civilised and conciliatory gesture.

He is survived by a son and daughter of his first marriage, to Joan Agnes Hare, which was dissolved. His second wife, Anne, died in 1987.



operations) and he wrote the

PERSONAL COLUMN

MEMORIAL SERVICES
RADZIWILL - A Memorial Service for the late Andrzej Radziewicz will be held at the Little Chantry (behind Newman's Street), Brompton Road, London SW7 on Friday 5th April 1999 at 6.30pm.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS
SAD. Obituaries, funeral notices. Call 0171 262 5236.

THANKSGIVING SERVICES
WALLACE - A Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Carole Wallace will be held at St John the Baptist, Little Marlow, Bucks at 2.30pm on Wednesday April 21st 1999. If further details required telephone (0171) 229 4393.

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LEGAL, PUBLIC, COMPANY & PARLIAMENTARY NOTICES
TO PLACE NOTICES IN THESE SECTIONS PLEASE. Call 0171 262 5236.

THE ABYSSINIAN EXPEDITION

FROM A CASUAL CONTRIBUTOR CAMP BOOHAH, March 3

... THE road from Dolo to Booyah leads over the Afghook, a limestone ridge on the southern side of the Dolo river, and then descends sharply into the valley formed by the watercourse that runs close beside this part. This valley like all the other valleys of this part of Abyssinia, has a deep black soil similar to that which is always found so favourable for the cultivation of cotton. At present these valleys are little tilled, but if capital were invested upon them and cotton grown, the country would soon grow rich.

ON THIS DAY

March 31, 1868

The Abyssinian Expedition was mounted not to add another country to the Empire but to free British subjects incarcerated by Emperor Theodore. Its task was successful. Magdala was captured and the prisoners freed during the next month.

The town contains about 400 houses, the inhabitants of which turned out en masse to stare upon the strange white men, the Franks (as all Europeans are called), who had come from some unknown far-off land to join in battle with the Mighty Theodore. The men soon became quite friendly partly from curiosity, partly from a desire to possess some of those countless dollars of which popular rumour asserts that every Frank is possessed, and which a lucky fortune had pressed to be scattered over Tigre.

Atherton out of World Cup

Sport, page 48

BUSINESS • ARTS • PROPERTY • SPORT • TELEVISION

THE TIMES

Lepage in the fun factory

Arts, page 34

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY MARCH 31 1999

European Commission weighs in with reduced growth forecasts

ECB rate cut pressure grows

By ALASDAIR MURRAY
ECONOMICS
CORRESPONDENT

THE European Commission yesterday increased pressure on the European Central Bank to cut interest rates but triggered a row with Germany over a sharp downgrade to the country's growth figures.

rates without endangering its inflation target. In an accompanying economic policy recommendation, the Commission said it wanted European governments to ensure that "monetary policy has adequate room for manoeuvre in the light of prevailing conditions characterised by a considerable slack in the product and labour markets".

Yves-Thibault de Silguy, acting Monetary Affairs Commissioner, made it clear that the ECB would feel its hands were tied unless European countries maintained tight control of their budgets and kept the lid

on wage inflation. The Commission singled out France, Germany, Italy and The Netherlands for budgetary criticism, forecasting that these countries would fail to hit their own targets this year. M de Silguy added, however, that the Commission did not regard new measures as necessary, rather that these countries must maintain an iron grip on their finances.

Germany also came under fire for its failure to trim industry subsidies, review its unemployment benefits system and speed up cuts to labour taxes. The Commission also called

on France to introduce its promised 35-hour week in a way that did not increase the overall cost of labour and promoted flexible working times. However, it was the Commission's decision to reduce its forecast for German economic growth from 2.2 per cent to 1.7 per cent this year which prompted an official riposte from the German Government.

Werner Müller, German Economics Minister, described the Commission forecasts as "too defensive" and "too low". He insisted, however, that there was no "reason to over-dramatise this" adding that in the second half of the year an improvement in the global economy would help to lift European growth.

The forecasts, however, had only a limited impact on the euro which yesterday rebounded off its recent lows on hopes that a solution could be found to the Kosovo crisis. Traders said that comments from President Yeltsin and the visit of Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Prime Minister, to Belgrade had eased some of the market fears that Nato could become embroiled in a

Business Today

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Pillington in the frame 28
Unit trusts:
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Change of image

The Hugo Boss chief who has designs on women
page 29

STOCK MARKET INDEXES		
FTSE 100	2884.10	(+11.2)
Yield	2.47%	
FTSE All Share	2883.10	(+4.75)
Nikkei	13589.12	(+167.72)
Dow Jones	9854.05	(+52.73)
S&P Composite	1384.72	(+3.45)

US RATE		
Federal Funds	4.75%	(4.75)
Long bond	5.52%	(5.52)
Yield	5.52%	(5.52)

LONDON MONEY		
3-month interbank	5%	(5%)
12-month bill	5.75%	(5.75)
12-month T-bill	5.75%	(5.75)

STERLING		
New York	1.8120*	(1.8157)
London	1.8137	(1.8158)
Frankfurt	1.4894	(1.5104)
Paris	1.3652	(1.3670)
Madrid	164.24	(163.76)
1 mark	103.2	(103.8)

DOLLAR		
London	1.0733*	(1.0735)
Frankfurt	1.0824*	(1.0847)
Paris	120.54*	(120.58)
1 franc	108.9	(109.0)

NORTH SEA OIL		
Brent 15-day (Jun)	\$14.05	(\$14.45)
Oil		

GOLD		
London close	\$276.75	(\$280.95)
1 ounce		

Exchange rates		
London close	\$276.75	(\$280.95)
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Sainsbury finance chief in £500,000 payoff

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

ROSEMARY THORNE, only the second woman to be appointed finance director of a FTSE 100 company, is in line for a payoff of about £500,000 after the surprise announcement that she is to leave J Sainsbury, the supermarkets group.



Joachim Milberg, chairman of BMW, said in Munich yesterday that the long debate over the future of Rover has harmed the German carmaker's image

By SIGRID AUFTERBECK
IN MUNICH
AND ADAM JONES

BMW issues four-week ultimatum on Rover aid

BMW has given the Government four weeks to meet its demands for more than £180 million of state money to secure the future of the Rover car factory at Longbridge.

locations in Hungary, nor had it applied for funding from the Hungarian Government. However, he said: "We need to come to a solution fast, as we must go on planning our production. We need a decision from the UK Government within four weeks."

BMW a package worth £118 million, linked with reciprocal investment and productivity and training improvements, to build the new car at Longbridge.

over. It is the whole package: training, work flexibility, and so on. In Hungary, we could have a plant running seven days a week and 24 hours a day. The fact that wages are also 30 per cent lower there comes on top of that."

voluntary redundancy programme last year was much more popular than he expected. Provisions of DM600 million (£200 million) were made for redundancy costs in 1998. Whatever happens with Longbridge, BMW will keep Rover on a tighter leash. Key decisions will be moved to BMW management, and the Rover board will be reduced. Exchanges of BMW and Rover executives will be increased. There are currently 40 managers travelling between Munich and the UK.

MoD's wealth unveiled

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

THE "real" annual budget of the Ministry of Defence is about a quarter larger than currently shown in public accounts, the Government is expected to say later this year.

base, but also by the difficulties in calculating writedown and depreciation costs for military hardware. The MoD is still wrangling with the accountants, for instance, over its nuclear liabilities, which are estimated at anything between £10 billion and £15 billion.

The MoD has been trying to shed its reputation for poor financial management. It has even posted accountants with troops on active service to improve financial management, but it emphasises that accountants will never be allowed to run a war.

Commentary, page 27

Man U profits offside

By PAUL ARMSTRONG

SUCCESS is coming at a price for Manchester United fans with the club revealing yesterday that it will charge an extra £2 a ticket next season to help to fund its players' soaring wages.

Gill said that this ranking excluded the price rises to be announced by rival clubs for next season. He rejected suggestions that United's fans were being disadvantaged to the benefit of its shareholders, who were told yesterday that their interim dividend would rise by 5.8 per cent to 0.55p a share despite a fall in the club's earnings.

United's pre-tax profit slumped 28 per cent to £11.1 million for the six months to January 31 after incurring a series of

Bank of Scotland and Royal Bank launch joint venture

Bank of Scotland recently announced a joint venture, which is proving controversial, with the American evangelist Pat Robertson. The bank is to provide a credit card through Mr Robertson's religious TV channel in the United States.

OUR article (December 11) about recent results from Royal Doulton commented on the management record of Stuart Lyons. He left the company in May 1997, more than 18 months earlier. He did not combine the role of chief executive and chairman, but reported to a board with an independent chairman and external directors. He left by mutual consent after business proposals, which the board and its advisers believed to be in the company's best interests, were not supported by a major shareholder. Our claim that he received no compensation for his departure was wrong, for which we apologise.

Vittorio Radice, left, and Peter Williams, finance director, want upgrade in Central London

It is understood that the Cabinet Office taskforce set up by Tony Blair to examine the issue of security on the Internet — made up of officials from the Home Office, the Department of Trade and Industry, and the security forces — has reacted favourably to the idea of an "Al Capone" law. However, a Government source last night said: "It solves part of the problem, but it certainly doesn't help if you're trying to monitor information without alerting a suspect."

THE Personal Investment Authority (PIA) has fined Lambert Fenchurch Financial Services £190,000 for failing to review its pensions mis-selling cases (Caroline Merritt writes).

The financial adviser and broker, formed from the merger of Lowndes Lambert and Fenchurch Insurance two years ago, will pay the fine plus £15,000 in legal costs, after being found guilty by the PIA of failing to hold a proper inquiry in the first phase of the pensions mis-selling review.

The broker said that the pensions

the merger of the two companies, has subsequently made an £8 million provision against mis-selling.

Financial advisers and life insurance companies have been forced to compensate hundreds of thousands of people who were encouraged to give up rights to occupational schemes in favour of taking on a personal pension. The total bill for the industry is expected to reach about £18 billion.

The first phase of the review, which ended on December 31, concerned people in, or near, retirement. The second

	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia \$	2.66	2.48
Austria Sfr	21.95	19.79
Belgium F	63.75	58.99
Canada Cdn	1.00	0.95
Cong & Op L	0.9118	0.8401
Denmark Kr	11.75	10.85
France F	5.70	5.09
Germany M	1.00	0.95
Greece Dr	10.92	8.54
Italy L	11.75	10.85
Japan Y	51.34	47.54
South Korea W	13.93	13.03
Taiwan N	17.72	17.02
Indonesia Rp	17.72	17.02
Malaysia M	1.00	0.95
Japan S	8.87	8.27
Philippines P	13.93	13.03
Thailand B	20.48	19.19
United Kingdom £	1.00	0.95
Vietnam G	3.499	3.249
Yugoslavia D	13.93	13.03
Yuan P	13.14	12.19
Yuan R	13.14	12.19
Yuan S	13.14	12.19
Yuan T	10.67	9.71
Yuan W	251.27	231.77
Swedish Kr	251.27	231.77
Swedish F	251.27	231.77
Swedish P	0.91689	0.8772
Swedish W	1.720	1.574

Rates for small denomination banknotes.
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THE PETROL price war could be over, the chairman of Save Group, the independent forecourt retailer predicted yesterday after revealing that profits last year fell by more than a third (Carl Morrish writes).

James Frost said prices had now picked up after the Budget earlier this month, following a vicious period of discounting led by Esso's 2p per litre voucher promotion.

"We could, but I am not saying will, finally find ourselves

More poker at Longbridge



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

Ultimatums and deadlines have been part of the routine for decades at Longbridge, the motor plant with a history. Herbert Austin's old monster sank both the British Motor Corporation and British Leyland. It has been the albatross round the neck of any owner of the revived and in other ways attractive Rover group.

How delighted BMW would be to get rid of it, echoing the emotions of any of its owners since the 1960s. How different the fate of the British-owned motor industry might otherwise have been.

If that was easy, however, the Bavarian group would not still be haggling with Stephen Byers over the timing and amount of UK grants to help to reinvent Birmingham's pride and shame. A cheque for £200 million would be in the post, with a note respectfully saying that if more is needed later, British taxpayers will do anything they could to oblige.

BMW is still not quite the global player it claims to be. Its non-EU alternative, needed to wave money from taxpayers through Brussels competition regulators, is a greenfield project in Hungary that does not even have a green field. Had BMW thought things through, a new spare part plant might have made more sense.

Bernard Fischetsrieder, the sacked former BMW boss who got them into Rover, bought it for the great prize of Land Rover. It has not disappointed. Along with Land Rover, however, BMW had

to take Longbridge et al, and to make sense of them in a long-term strategy for BMW.

The Bavarians were not aiming to challenge Ford or Toyota but to go as near as they dare via a range of innovative mid-market vehicles. These would add the bulk that would allow BMW to retain its independence in the global car market.

Both the new Mini and the new small family car are intended to be built at Longbridge. Somehow, you cannot see the market waiting for the first harvest of Minis to spring from the Hungarian pusztas.

The strategic mess has only been complicated by BMW's delayed launch of the new generation Rolls-Royce. This too may be homeless if Volkswagen/Bentley keeps the Crewe works.

So the nails are being bitten in Birmingham, in Whitehall and in Munich. The new team at BMW, though doubtless highly competent at developing and manufacturing motor cars, do not yet seem to be in the same league of cynical professionalism as their counterparts on the other sides of the negotiations. Mistakes cannot therefore be ruled out.

Rightly, the Government is in no mood to ladle out taxpayers' cash ad lib, especially for Longbridge. It is no secret to say that 50,000 West Midlands jobs are at stake. But Longbridge is a graveyard in which many of the ambitions for British industry that Whitehall dreamed up in the old interventionist days are now expensively buried.

Four weeks is ample time to sit back and tease out these issues. It should not be wasted. The stakes remain high and either side looks liable to miscalculate its hand spectacularly.

One day, all this will be ours

How poignant that the Ministry of Defence should give the first sightings of its potentially incendiary switch to resource accounting when our lads and lasses are risking their lives in the line of duty in the Balkans. Good timing, chaps.

At least it is pretty clear why Britain spends so unusually high

a proportion of national income on defence. More pertinently, the timing reminds us why you have to tie up such vast tracts of valuable land, air and sea ports, property and equipment that many myopic folk are ordinarily prone to think might be put to some more intensive, productive use.

Converting the public sector to commercial accounting conventions has practical purposes, especially for the MoD. One is to end the Whitehall spending lottery at this time of year.

According to how the department's budget was going, you would take delivery of an extra frigate or paint the CO's quarters just before the end of one financial year, put it off a few days or shelve it until the same budget-filling ritual comes up in 12 months' time. If you allow for commitments and lay balance sheet concepts of debtors and creditors over cash accounting, spending can follow priorities.

A deeper purpose is to expose the true assets being employed and account properly for the

costs of using them up. The MoD was most vulnerable. Exposing its full costs would point up the potential for contracting out, private-public partnerships and similar new-fangled names for the asset-stripping exercises that Gordon Brown is so keen on.

Gargantuan figures have been bandied about for the value of MoD assets and the true extra costs of amortising them. Conveniently, and perhaps realistically, the hidden treasures turn out to be smaller, as are the extra hidden running costs.

Even the most hard-headed accountants can argue vehemently about the value of something like Salisbury Plain or our bases in Cyprus. The value of a small island as prime housing plots is somewhat different from that of contaminated windswept heaths that would cost a fortune to restore to public amenity use.

The figures are still huge, about £90 billion of assets before nuclear clean-up costs. Treasury Scrooges will salivate over 700

leading land sites. But the biggest assets, according to the MoD, are operational Trident submarine weapon systems. There may be little that MoD can properly do to cut depreciation or to "make the assets sweat".

Mind you, it would surely make any attempt to scrap Trident on moral grounds look mind-bogglingly expensive.

Tartan temptation in the making

Scottish business has a tradition of misreading its fellow-citizens' national feelings. Could they get it right this time? With devolution on the way, the country's two independent quoted high street banks are pooling their native cannyness, thrift and resources to build a joint acquisition finance house. It aims to take on the corporate might of Goldman Sachs and Chase Manhattan.

Both home champion Bank of Scotland and the more cosmopolitan Royal Bank already offer finance for smaller management buyouts. Their sights are now set on the bigger £100 million to £400 million deals, both in the UK and Europe. The joint venture will come into the market

with a lending rate modestly set at 2 per cent above Libor. It intends to compete in the market dominated by the Americans by offering innovative deals.

Outsiders may think it entirely natural that the neighbours and rivals should come together in Caledonian Capital. In Scotland, however, many a refined eyebrow will be raised.

Both banks were at pains yesterday to deny that this was a prelude to any kind of merger. They have roughly equal large shares of the domestic market and claim such a deal would not pass muster. That may be true under the Anglo-Saxon preference for competition.

A Scottish government might prefer to sacrifice consumers and opt to have one powerful Scottish bank rather than, as otherwise seems likely, just two more local subsidiaries of foreign groups.

Divided they hope

AMAZING what a boost in the crude price can do for one's long-term strategy. While BP-Amoco strikes up the Wedding March again, Enterprise and Lloyds have switched to Let's Call the Whole Thing Off. The lost explorers tried to avoid repeating the costly pain of a hostile bid, only to find that there is no such thing as an equal merger. They split in civilised fashion, without the ego-screaming rancour of Smith-Kline Beecham and Glaxo Wellcome, but investors are still liable to let them hang separately.

Australian takeover by Rugby

By PAUL ARMSTRONG

RUGBY GROUP has agreed to buy control of Australia's biggest cementmaker and plans to raise at least £250 million from the sale of non-core assets under a widely expected restructuring that was announced yesterday.

The moves are aimed at making Rugby solely a cement company and will leave it with up to £700 million to spend on further acquisitions in the industry.

Rugby has agreed to a £325 million (£124 million) reverse takeover of Adelaide Brighton, an Australian-listed cement group, involving the sale of Rugby's Cockburn Cement business in return for Adelaide scrip.

The second tier of the deal will see Adelaide buy, for £362 million, the 49 per cent of its key operating subsidiary, Adelaide Brighton Cement, that it does not already own.

The deal will leave Rugby with 55 per cent of the expanded Adelaide group, which will have 25 per cent of the Australian cement market.

Peter Johnson, chief executive of Rugby, said that merging the Cockburn and Adelaide operations was expected to deliver annual savings of about £30 million.

He said that the deal, which is subject to the approval of both groups of shareholders and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, was expected to be completed by June.

Rugby Group also yesterday disclosed that it was in advanced negotiations to sell its joinery and US distribution businesses to Jeld-Wen, an American group. This is expected to raise slightly more than their carrying value of £25 million.

Details of the restructuring came as Rugby unveiled a marginal fall in 1998 pre-tax profits to £76.6 million, excluding exceptional charges and gains from disposals.

A final dividend of 2.55p was declared, taking the year's payout to 4.3p, up 7.5 per cent.

Times, page 28

Signet to keep US operations

By MATTHEW BARBOUR

SIGNET, the jewellery retailer, yesterday said that it had no plans to float or sell-off its US operations. The announcement comes in the wake of continued calls from a group of US investors, holding about 6 per cent of shares, who argue that selling-off or floating at least 20 per cent of its US operations would create more value for shareholders.

Signet, which reported full-year pre-tax profits up 30 per cent at £89.2 million (£68.7 million), countered that such a move would erode the company's value. The US operations, called Sterling, accounted for two-thirds of group sales of £991.2 million last year and now comprise 70 per cent of group assets.

Signet is also set to pay its first dividend for almost eight years. Shareholders will receive a final dividend of 1p per share. Dividends were suspended in 1992. Earnings per share rose to 3.9p (3p).

Stanley bid agreed by Capital

By DOMINIC WALSH

STANLEY Leisure, the gaming group, yesterday persuaded the board of Capital Corporation to back its takeover bid, after raising its all-cash offer from 80p a share to 85p.

The offer, which values the London casino operator at £86.4 million, was accompanied by a profit warning from Stanley relating to its book-making division where recent results had been "particularly disappointing".

In common with its competitors, margins have been hit by the large number of favourites winning races. It said profits in the year to May 2 would "not achieve market expectations". Leonard Steinberg, Stanley's chairman, added: "We know the situation will correct itself."

Its offer for Capital, which carries a share alternative, was only grudgingly accepted by Ernest Sharp, Capital's chairman, who claimed it still failed to "fully recognise Capital's recovery potential".

Save Group hints at petrol pricing truce

THE PETROL price war could be over, the chairman of Save Group, the independent forecourt retailer predicted yesterday after revealing that profits last year fell by more than a third (Cazl Morishaw writes).

James Frost said prices had now picked up after the Budget earlier this month, following a vicious period of discounting led by Esso's 2p per litre voucher promotion.

"We could, but I am not saying will, finally find ourselves

at the end of the most expensive and bloody period ever in the history of the industry in the UK," Mr Frost said.

As the company sacrificed sales to preserve margins, Save's pre-tax profit before exceptional items fell from £9 million to £5.5 million in 1998, with sales almost flat at £422 million. The company expects sales in the first quarter to be 5 per cent below last year as a result of its policy of premium pricing during the Esso voucher campaign.

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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Business Type	Number of Employees	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10-250 <input type="checkbox"/> 251-500 <input type="checkbox"/> 500+

STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Mounting bid talk puts Pilkington in the frame

PILKINGTON, that perennial takeover target, was up and running on mounting speculation that a bid may finally be on the way.

The price of Britain's biggest glassmaker rose 4p to 79p in heavy trading that saw almost 12 million shares change hands.

If the speculators are to be believed an offer of 100p a share will land on the table today from either St Gobain, the French group, or Wolsley, up 7p to 462p.

Paolo Scaroni, chief executive, has been touring the Square Mile talking to brokers. His message has been up and down the US and European automotive markets showing signs of accelerating.

The Pilkington share price has come up from a low at the start of the year of 50p which followed yet another profits warning.

Share prices generally halved earlier gains, with the FTSE 100 index ending 11.2 up at 6,264.1 as total turnover reached 1.7 billion shares.

An early mark-up was fuelled by fresh merger speculation and Wall Street's positive performance overnight which saw the Dow Jones industrial average close above 10,000 for the first time.

But the opening fall in New York ahead of last night's Federal Reserve Open Market Committee meeting took the edge off prices in London later in the day.

Among leaders, ICI climbed 1p to 560p with dealers claiming that the group may soon reveal details of its proposed £2 billion sell-off.

Centrica fell 4p at 109p as 90.3 million shares were traded. Deutsche Bank arranged a bought deal in 41.22 million shares at 108p. They were sold on at 109p after being broken up into various parcels, including two of five million, a further lot of 10.6 million and one of 4.8 million.

Almost 12 million BAT shares changed hands as the price jumped 22p to 510p. Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, the broker, raised the shares a "buy". Boots dropped 28p to 592p as Merrill Lynch, the broker, cut its recommendation for the shares from "accumulate" to "hold".

National Grid firmed 7p to 445p as Goldman Sachs, the US securities house, raised its recommendation for the shares from "market perform"



Despite revealing a rise in profits Charlie Parker, left, and Guy Buckley, chief operations officer, saw Clubbush fall

to "market outperform" and set a target price of 51p.

Reuters benefited from some bullish remarks from ABN Amro Hoare Govett, the broker, and rose 27p to 89p.

After City presentations Emap dropped 6p to £12.20 with brokers Warburg Dillon Reed, Morgan Stanley Dean Witter and BT Alex Brown all downgrading their profit forecasts.

Royalbank eased 2p to 527p as Alan Neilson, a director, unloaded 300,000 shares at 525p. This reduces his holding to 133,529, or less than 1 per cent.

Still reeling from last week's profits warning, AEA Technology fell another 33p to 348p. Sir Anthony Cleaver, chairman, has bought 10,000 shares at 350p. He now holds 28,085.

Devro, the troubled sausage

skin supplier, climbed 19p to 142p on talk of an offer of 200p a share soon. Inn Business, the tenanted pub operator, rose 3p to 69p despite confirmation from Enterprise Inns that it has withdrawn its recent 75p-a-share offer. The rise in its share price—

allied to its earlier refusal of Enterprise's offer—suggests others may be out there ready to pay more than 75p. Alchemy Partners, the venture capitalist that acquired Ushers of Trowbridge, is tipped to make a move.

AIM-listed Mears, the building maintenance and service specialist, held steady at 124p. The group is on target to achieve pre-tax profits of £1.2 million in the current year, having lifted them 26 per cent last time. Between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of the shares are already up to date. Eaglet Investment Trust holds 12 per cent. Mears, headed by Bob Holt, is likely to attract the attention of Michael Ashcroft's acquisitive Carlisle Holdings.

Scottish Metropolitan Properties stood out with a jump of 6p to 85p as one buyer paid for stock at a premium to the ruling price. A line of 9.75 million shares was snapped up at 83p with a further 7.93 million and 1.15 million bought at 83p.

Investors gave a lukewarm response to final results from Clubbush, down 6p at 58p. The golf course and health and fitness operator, whose managing director is Charlie Parker, raised profits last year from £4.3 million to £7 million and said current trading was in line with expectations.

There was a late response to Monday's profits warning from Jones, Stroud Holdings after the official close of business. The shares slumped 23p, or 16 per cent, yesterday to 130p.

GILT EDGED: Bond prices in London enjoyed modest gains with investors worried about a tightening of US monetary policy ahead of last night's FOMC meeting.

Longer-dated issues recovered some of Monday's losses. In the futures pit, the June series of the long gilt finished 21p up at £116.97, while among conventional issues Treasury 9 per cent 2008 was 27p dearer at £133.46.

NEW YORK: Investors were cautious as Federal Reserve policymakers met to discuss interest rates. By midday the Dow Jones industrial average was down 52.73 at 9,954.05.

At the start of the year. Last year the figure was £25.5 billion. This increase in activity, combined with possible share buybacks, bode well for the sector.

Leading the way is likely to be Alliance & Leicester, up 9p at 86p. Morgan Stanley expects A&L shares to "outperform".

Neutral performances are expected from Abbey National, down 10p at £12.68, Halifax, 4p lower at 761p. Woolwich 7p up at 386p, and Northern Rock, 4p easier at 507p.

MORTGAGE activity is on the increase, and the mortgage lenders should be in a position to take advantage of it.

Earlier this month the British Bankers' Association recorded a near 3 per cent drop to £3.6 billion in February. However, this masked a near 20 per cent rise on the previous year.

Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, the US securities house, forecasts that net lending this year will be £27 billion, compared with a forecast of £24 billion made

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MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):
Dow Jones 9954.05 (-52.73)
S&P Composite 1306.72 (-3.43)

Tokyo:
Nikkei Average 1569.12 (-149.73)

Hong Kong:
Hang Seng 10940.21 (+251.74)

Amsterdam:
AEX Index 534.40 (-0.16)

Sydney:
All Ordinaries 2995.3 (+21.3)

Frankfurt:
DAX 4036.04 (-20.58)

Singapore:
Straits Times 1518.08 (+20.58)

Brussels:
Euronext 3260.00 (+6.43)

Paris:
CAC-40 4441.98 (-11.67)

Zurich:
SMI Index 7084.1 (-62.2)

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Free lunch for Britain's pensioners

Very low long-term interest rates are creating a problem for new and prospective pensioners. Low equity rates mean that nest eggs translate into a low monthly pension.

Such rates are not great for private pension providers either. Low bond yields mean that future liabilities are discounted at very low rates, increasing their present value. Bigger liabilities mean a smaller fund. In order to reduce risk in that situation, insurance companies and other pension providers are impelled to reduce their equity holdings in favour of government bonds.

Yet the Government is not borrowing very much at present and is forecast to repay debt as its budget moves into surplus. Strong demand and no supply is creating a shortage of long-dated low-risk assets and this is reflected in a very strange pattern of interest rates in the UK market. UK 30-year bonds yield slightly less than ten-year bonds. And while ten-year bonds here yield 50 basis points (half a percentage point)

more than their German Government counterparts, UK 30-year bonds yield 50 basis points less than their German equivalents. British long-dated index-linked bonds yield a miserable 1 per cent at the time of writing, compared with 3 per cent for US Treasury index-linked bonds.

Clearly the Government is missing a great opportunity. It is the monopoly supplier of long-dated risk-free assets to the financial markets. Other triple-A rated borrowers exist, but their balance sheets would not support the kind of insurance that the market needs. Moreover, no private entities borrow at the longest end of the market anyway. The Government could issue a great deal of debt in the 10 to 30 year range and do everyone a favour. Suppose it wanted to push the yield on 30-year bonds up to German levels, making life a

little easier for pensioners and pension providers. There is a rough rule of thumb that says that yields would increase by about ten basis points for every 1 per cent of GDP it added to its debt. That implies it could put out about £35 billion of long-dated bonds at an average interest rate of about 5 per cent.

But what would the Government do with all that money? Not spend it, evidently, since it has to acquire assets to balance its liabilities. The obvious thing to do is what President Clinton suggested recently: invest it in the stock market. The annual return on UK equities has been well into double digits in the past decade or two. But let us be conservative, or prudent, to use a word favoured by the Chancellor. Suppose the stock market returned on average only 7 per cent a year going forward, about its average over the whole



period since the early 1960s. The Government would have a new revenue stream equivalent to an average 2 per cent of £35 billion, some £700 million a year. It would not come in like clockwork, of course, because equity markets go up and down, but on average it would be there.

That money could be used to finance the state pension scheme, still essential for those people too poor to be able to afford an adequate private scheme. Britain has nearly ten million pensioners, receiving £30 million in basic old-age pension. The extra income would enable each of them to receive an extra £70 a year. The beauty of this scheme is that it conforms to all the tenets of new Labour: no dogma; government should not usurp the functions of the private sector; it should do only that which no other agency can do. Well, only the State can supply riskless assets on the scale that the markets require; only the State can borrow so cheaply; only the State can carry out the arbitrage between the risk-free interest rate and the higher return available in the equity market.

Some will no doubt echo the concerns of Alan Greenspan, the Fed Chairman, when he heard of President Clinton's plan to invest US social security funds in the stock market. He feared political interference with investment processes and even with the management of companies with shares in public hands.

These are legitimate concerns, but accommodating them is elementary. Evidently, the funds must not be in the hands of politicians. A Community Chest could be established to be administered by a Board of Trustees appointed for long terms and with no option of re-appointment. Their statutes should make them as independent of government as, say, the European Central Bank. Moreover, those statutes should oblige the trustees to put the funds out to commercial management, so that they would end up being run by the same people and institutions as private pension

money. These managers would address corporate governance issues in the same way that they do now. The Government would have nothing to do with any of it.

Of course, the Community Chest's operations could be counted as part of the PSBR, if the Treasury insists, but they would not endanger the Chancellor's "golden rules". All borrowing would be for investment, by definition. And while the gross debt-to-GDP ratio of the public sector would rise, its net debt would not, since the bond issuance would be balanced by equity acquisition. Since the equities would rise in value while the bonds did not, the net debt would be most likely to fall.

Private and public pensioners would be better off and the dictates of prudence would be observed. If only all public policy problems were so easy to solve!

Gerald Holtham is Global Strategist, Norwich Union Investment Management. The author writes here in a personal capacity and the views expressed are his own.

Hugo Boss prepares to focus effort on attracting women

The menswear designer believes it can overcome its macho image, says Sarah Cunningham

Launching a leading women's fashion label is not a task to be undertaken lightly, which is why Hugo Boss, one of the world's leading men's fashion houses, has spent no less than 15 years working on its plans.

Werner Baldessarini, the chairman and chief executive of Hugo Boss, is well aware of the pitfalls. An ill-fated attempt was made 12 years ago to add a handful of women's items to the main men's range. So this time Hugo Boss is going all the way, with a full range of Boss for women due in the shops in two years' time.

Perhaps the main obstacle for Boss is that it is such an unreservedly masculine brand. The actual name, the mean and moody advertising, the long-standing sponsorship of Formula One motor racing, the clothing itself, with its emphasis on tailored suits — it is all rather macho.

Herr Baldessarini says that the image problem is surmountable. A toe has been dipped in the water with the launch of a "Hugo" women's wear collection which has sold well. Like the Hugo-labelled menswear, it is aimed at a younger, funkier audience than the main Boss range, which makes up more than 90 per cent of the company's sales.

Another look will also be taken at sponsorship to make it more appealing to women, although he is determined not to give up his beloved F1, and says: "We are not about to start sponsoring ballet."

Also, a Boss women's fragrance will be launched, by licence-holder Procter & Gamble, before the first clothing collection finally hits the stores in 2001.

Most importantly, Hugo Boss announced yesterday that women's wear will be run by a separate team and based in Milan, far from the company's German headquarters. Herr Baldessarini, who oversees all of the menswear designs, will



Werner Baldessarini aims to make the brand more appealing to women but said: "We're not about to start sponsoring ballet"

take more of a back seat in dealing with women's clothing. "I cannot do women's wear. I find it difficult to design things that I cannot wear myself. But I can say what I like and, for sure, if I do not like the collection it won't come on the market," he says.

Even at this stage, there is going to be no rush to bring out the women's range. "We are going to do a full collection, then bring it out half a year later. I do not want to endanger the men's line."

An Italian women's wear specialist is heading the new venture and is beginning to recruit designers and staff to work in Milan. Hugo Boss is investing an initial DM50 million (£17 million), and hopes to see sales of DM100 million in the first year, building up to DM300 million a year.

Although this will be huge in comparison with the Hugo women's wear's first season sales of just DM7 million, compared to the men's side of the business, it is small beer. During 1998, sales of the Boss label menswear grew to DM1.23 billion (DM1.04 billion) out of a group total of DM1.34 billion. The group has relatively low exposure to Asia, and has seen its sales rise steadily in the late Nineties while other fashion houses have stalled.

Hugo Boss is unusual among the international fashion brands, and not only because of its concentration on menswear. Unlike the classic fashion house such as Christian Dior and Chanel, or the more recently founded Jean Paul Gaultier and Paul Smith, it is a fictional brand. The real

Hugo Boss was the uncle of Jochen and Uwe Holy, the brothers who founded the company in the early Seventies. His name was used not because he had anything to do with the business, but because it sounded good.

Also, the company is based in Metzingen, a small town in southern Germany. Herr Baldessarini jokes that Metzingen is like Beverly Hills to Stuttgart's Los Angeles, but even he was horrified when he joined the company 23 years ago. For the first few years used to head

off to Munich, his home town, every weekend. Now, he likes it. "I'm married. I've grown to like fresh air. I like the people and I travel a lot," he says.

Herr Baldessarini, who is now 54 years old and took over as chairman and chief executive at the end of last year, abhors the signs of consolidation within the fashion sector. The attempt by LVMH, the French luxury goods conglomerate, to bring Gucci, the Italian brand, into its fold make no sense to him. "Why is Chrysler with Mercedes? That also seems very strange to me. Each company has to have a soul and people want brands with an honest character."

"Perhaps when others become too big, it is a good chance for the smaller companies," he says.

References to cars and the car industry scatter his conversation. He usually drives a black Porsche 911, and at one stage was asked to design his own version. The Baldessarini 911 was, he says, too expensive to produce. But his favourite car is a Jaguar and he loves it not just as a classic design and piece of engineering, but because "it is always a little trouble, but it is the clearest design in automobiles. It is perfect."

Perfection comes from companies with a coherent vision, he says. "I don't believe in all this talk of synergies." Although Hugo Boss considered buying an existing women's wear business, rather than setting up from scratch, he was never really tempted. "Building up a new business is very exciting," Herr Baldessarini says. "I don't remember anyone doing it on this scale. It's a big challenge and we must be careful."

Vittorio Radice, the chief executive of Selfridges, the department store company, stocks Hugo Boss menswear and says he is looking forward to seeing Boss women's wear: "I'll give you an example — Paul Smith launched women's wear and it has sold very well. Boss will be the same. I hope I will be the first to stock it."

ONE OF Lloyd's of London's more maverick underwriters is insisting he has insured 30 members of the Royal Household against the possibility of being sacked by the Queen.

Simon Burgess, who admits he specialises in exotic insurance policies for their novelty value and for publicity purposes, says the retainers have taken up his "revolutionary" — odd choice of words, that — unemployment policy.

He says they approached him through a legitimate Lloyd's broker, which asked him to write a group policy. I have no idea whether any of this is true; I merely record that his agency has previously offered insurance policies against virgin birth and alien abduction and allow you to draw your own conclusions.

AN UNUSUAL investment opportunity from France. Jean-Marie Le Pen, the right-wing politician whose National Front once took 15 per cent of the vote, is offering high returns to those of his supporters prepared to lend him money.

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BUSINESS LETTERS

Year 2000 compliance problems can be resolved

From Mr David Clark

Sir, In response to Hugh Kearns (Business letters, March 25) may I allay fears somewhat of a complete meltdown in the City of London come January 1, 2000. My company is currently working with a number of financial houses in the City to make sure they are definitely not one of the "12 rotten apples in the barrel" by a very quick, yet thorough and effective Y2K audit of embedded systems.

Whilst I cannot defend those City financial names who have not had a comprehensive audit, I can offer some assurance that any Y2K compliance problem can be quickly resolved. Businesses have been

bombarded by a great deal of unfounded panic and hype regarding the so-called millennium bug and, while there are certainly potential problems if companies do nothing to make their systems compliant, the answer is to act now, and decisively.

The City's financial houses and other companies must ensure that they manage all areas of risk to their business. For instance, embedded systems, where the code used to control computers, are often overlooked. Such systems include fire alarms, plant controls, UPS equipment, access control, lifts and generators.

We aim to make sure that the business operations, and hence the business which is being supported by technology, are going to survive. So in answer to Mr Kearns's question, "who is going to do what and when?" may I suggest that those concerned should give me a call.

Yours sincerely,
D. CLARK,
BSC Consulting,
24/26 Baltic Street West,
London,
EC1Y 0UR.

Blue Circle move stood test of time

From Mr Lionel Mendoza

Sir, In Paul Armstrong's interesting article on the exploitation of Blue Circle Industries extensive land holdings in Kent, he finishes by asking, "Why didn't someone think of it (the development) before?"

As someone who acted as property adviser to Blue Circle in the late Seventies and early Eighties, I can inform your readers that the notion of a multimillion pound mixed development comprising retail, leisure, industry, offices and possibly housing was indeed thoroughly investigated.

That oldest of property adages — "name the three most important priorities in terms of a successful property venture — location, location, location!" — was as true then as ever. The advent of the M25 for access-

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to the benefits of the cross-Channel connection and other strategic benefits, together with the growth in leisure and the attitudes of town planners and funding institutions, were not then as apparent.

Which brings me on to that other great maxim, this time not solely connected with real estate but of life generally, namely timing! It is often the case, as in this instance, that even the most inauspicious piece of land can, in time, rise in value.

The Blue Circle holding was always going to be a winner — in time!

Yours faithfully,
LIONEL MENDOZA,
Woodpeckers,
Hangerwood,
Sherburnbury,
RH13 8HJ.

Fresh fields

THIS must be a sign of the times, as lawyers become increasingly aware of the commercial realities which we all have to observe. Kirk Stephenson, former finance director of Coats Vyeila until the demerger was pulled last September, is joining Freshfields, one of our biggest City lawyers, as chief operating officer.

I am not aware of any other legal firm that has such a position, al-

though I will now probably be deluged with examples. Stephenson quit Coats about when the demerger was abandoned *sine die* and has been looking around for an appropriate position since.

Only a fortnight ago the Coats chairman, Sir David Alliance, and his chief executive also announced their departure.

Stephenson is an old City hand, starting at SG Warburg and then working at Morgan Stanley before he went into industry.

A FULSOME eulogy to the two departed directors of J Sainsbury from the chairman, Sir George Bull. "My colleagues and I want to express our appreciation for the contribution made by Rosemary Thorne and David Clapman," he says.

Actually, it's David Clapman, Sir George. As in Junction, Sainsbury admit the mistake and have apologised. But then, he had only been there 35 years. As the saying goes, I'll never forget what's his name.

Duff note

THE woman known as "the Hillary Clinton of the record industry" for



her abrupt rise in the shadow of her husband has just been granted shares in EMI worth £45,000. They are part of the senior executive incentive plan at the company and will go to Nancy Berry.

She is vice-chairman of Virgin Records America. She is also wife of Ken Berry, who runs EMI's recorded music side, and this has required the announcement.

It will not do much to change her lifestyle — she probably spends about that much a year on flowers for their Bel Air mansion in Los Angeles. Plus, her husband is on a maximum package of \$7.4 million a year.

Reports suggested that her promotion by her husband caused a rift between him and Sir Colin Southgate, the now departed EMI chairman.



"At least we're above Manchester United this year"

Pen pals

AN UNUSUAL investment opportunity from France. Jean-Marie Le Pen, the right-wing politician whose National Front once took 15 per cent of the vote, is offering high returns to those of his supporters prepared to lend him money.

He is offering an interest rate of 5 per cent to anyone prepared to back his party to fight this summer's elections for the European Parliament. This compares with the scant 3 per cent or less you would get from any of the normal French banks.



Jean-Marie Le Pen is seeking funds to fight an election

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CONSISTENTLY IT

T Easy 2

Japanese jobless total rises to record level

FROM ROBERT WHYMAN
IN TOKYO

HOPES of an imminent economic recovery for Japan were dented yesterday by government figures showing unemployment at record levels, and a sharp decline in families' willingness to spend.

The unemployment rate jumped to 4.6 per cent in February, a rise of 0.2 percentage points from the previous month. This compares with 4.4 per cent in America. There were 3.13 mil-

lion workers without jobs, exceeding the three million mark for the first time since the Government started compiling data in 1953.

The abrupt rise came as a setback for Japanese leaders, who have insisted in recent weeks that the nation's worst postwar recession has bottomed out and a turnaround is imminent.

Taiichi Sakaiya, head of Japan's Economic Planning Agency, said: "Frankly speaking, we have to admit that the February data was worse

than expected." Only two days ago Mr Sakaiya gave an optimistic forecast that the economy would pick up towards the end of this year because of public works spending and increased sales of apartments.

Adding to the gloom, data released yesterday showed that spending by Japanese wage-earners' households fell 4.1 per cent in real terms in February. The Government reported that families spent just 67.8 per cent of their disposable income, down from 70.9 per cent in January, marking the

lowest "propensity to consume" on record.

"This shows that the economy's ability to rebound is still extremely weak," Mr Sakaiya said.

Spending by Japanese consumers makes up roughly 60 per cent of the economy, but people are in no hurry to spend their way out of recession.

Despite hopeful signs — a government bailout has stabilised the nation's shaky banks, and share prices have rebounded — Japanese consumers remain wary.

With scores of firms announcing plans to streamline their operations — including large companies such as Toshiba and NEC — the outlook for labour is unsettling. Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's appeal to citizens to shake off their gloom and embrace "constructive optimism" has fallen on deaf ears.

The word that Japanese workers have come to dread most is *ristora* — restructuring — which is spreading as firms pare labour costs to weather the recession and boost competitiveness.

Investors seek to oust CSG chiefs

INSTITUTIONAL investors are seeking to oust five directors of Corporate Services Group after the employment services company issued its second profits warning this month. Schroder Investment Management, Mercury Asset Management and M&G Investment Management, which together own 31.59 per cent of CSG, called for a special meeting of shareholders to try to force through its proposed board changes.

CSG yesterday cut its forecast for 1998 profits before tax, interest, amortisation of goodwill and exceptional items to about £20 million. As recently as March 8 it had forecast flat profits of £33.5 million, well below market expectations. The dissident investors, who need approval from investors with more than half CSG's shares, want to appoint Michael Davies, Gilles Avemet and Peter Burton. They want to remove Jeffrey Fowler, chairman, and the directors John Abrahamson, Ralph Hulbert, Tim Holland-Bosworth and Ronald de Young. CSG shares fell 6½p to 71p. They set a 12-month high of 26½p last June, and were 16½p just before the March 8 profit warning.

Cussins Property flat

CUSSINS PROPERTY, the residential and commercial property group based in the North East of England, made unchanged pre-tax profits of £3.25 million in 1998 on turnover that rose to £38.5 million, from £34.1 million. Earnings fell to 12.8p a share, from 13.1p. The total dividend is increased to 4.75p a share, from 4.51p, with a 3.015p final. The company said that it achieved a 17 per cent increase in average selling prices with, for the first time, the average price exceeding £100,000, at £107,000. Turnover from commercial development activities rose to £2.9 million, from £1.9 million.

Bank One cuts jobs

AMERICA'S Bank One says that it is cutting up to 4,700 jobs, about 5 per cent of its workforce, as it completes integration of operations of First Chicago NBD. Bank One, which merged with First Chicago NBD in October in an all-share deal worth \$20.7 billion (£13 billion) said in a report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission that it would cut 4 to 5 per cent of the combined 94,000 workforce that the company had last September. Bank One took a merger-related \$984 million restructuring charge in the fourth quarter, and the report says that it will take a \$536 million charge this year.

PowderJect positive

POWDERJECT PHARMACEUTICALS has announced more positive results from the DNA vaccine for hepatitis B that it is developing with Glaxo Wellcome as part of a collaboration potentially worth \$300 million (£185 million). The Oxford company said that the powdered vaccine, delivered by its supersonic drug gun, stimulated a cellular response from the body's immune system in addition to stimulating the production of protective antibodies already reported. PowderJect's shares closed 8p down at 85½p, compared with a low last year of less than 20p.

Hepworth halts deal

HEPWORTH, the building materials company, has abandoned plans to acquire two drainage pipe companies after the proposed acquisition was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Kim Howells, Competition and Consumer Affairs Minister, yesterday said that the proposed acquisition of Naylor Drainage and Naylor Plastic raised competition concerns in respect of the market for the supply of clay drainage pipes in the UK. Hepworth said that the referral implied a delay of at least four months in completing the deal, creating uncertainty for employees and customers.

Huntleigh ahead

HUNTLEIGH TECHNOLOGY, the supplier of medical equipment, lifted its 1998 pre-tax profits to £14.36 million, from £11.49 million. The company enjoyed the benefit of an increase in expenditure by the National Health Service. Earnings rose to 11.9p a share, from 10.38p. A final dividend of 1.95p lifts the total to 3.5p, from 3.1p. The shares responded with a rise of 3½p to 28½p yesterday. Profits were ahead despite a £1 million loss on adverse currency movements. More than 50 per cent of Huntleigh's turnover of £101 million was derived from exports.

Oriental gives warning

ORIENTAL RESTAURANT GROUP, the purveyor of Far Eastern and Indian cuisine to City of London workers, saw its shares fall 16½p to 137½p yesterday as the company gave warning that it would not meet its full-year profits forecasts of £1.8 million for the financial year that closes today. The company, best known in the Square Mile for its Imperial City and Sri Siam outlets, said that the opening of its new Pacific Oriental flagship in Bishopsgate in the autumn had exceeded projected operating costs. The shares, down 14 per cent on the day, have come off last summer's highs of 355½p.

Barlows pegs payout

BARLOWS, the property investment and development group based in the North West, is leaving its total dividend unchanged at 2.5p a share, with a maintained 1.7p final, after suffering a fall in 1998 pre-tax profits to £1.25 million, from £2.2 million in 1997. There was an exceptional charge of £318,000 arising from the proposed merger with Trafford Park Estates, a rival property company also based in the North West, that did not proceed. At the year end Barlows had a net asset value of 72p a share, down from 76p a year earlier. The shares rose 3p to 65½p.

Peterhouse advances

PETERHOUSE, the specialist contracting and safety service group, announced a rise in 1998 pre-tax profits to £3.1 million, compared with £1.3 million in 1997. Earnings per share rose 26 per cent to 4.5p, and the total dividend is increased by 21.6p to 132½p yesterday. Turnover rose to £68.1 million, from £26.8 million. At the year end Peterhouse announced an agreed bid for Jackson Group that will lead to the creation of a new civil engineering division within the enlarged group.

Scotia chief condemns legacy of founder

BY PAUL DURMAN

ROB DOW, chief executive of Scotia Holdings, yesterday launched a scathing attack on the state of the drug development company when he took over from its founder David Horrobin 15 months ago.

Dr Dow found he had to abandon 21 research projects because of "equivalent research data, poor quality development data or inadequate commercial opportunity". Scotia had "significant inadequacies in skills in several key areas", and too many people on too many sites. Trials of Foscan, the cancer drug that is its most important product, were "significantly behind schedule".

The loss of data from a South African trial scuppered

the hopes of winning marketing approval for Amelrod, for use with cancer radiotherapy. Tarabecic, a treatment for the nerve damage caused by diabetes, also failed to win approval. Even in lipid biology — Scotia's main focus under Dr Horrobin — Dr Dow said the company would have "to go back to the drawing board", delaying further fat-based drug candidates for up to five years.

Scotia was formerly one of the UK's largest biopharmaceutical firms but its shares have crashed from 700p to 105½p since 1997. Dr Dow has cut staff numbers from 420 to 250 and is basing his recovery plan on Foscan and Olibra, a diet food ingredient being developed by St Ives and General Mills, the large US food company.

Dr Dow, who while at Roche was responsible for developing Xenical, the fast-selling obesity drug, plans to turn a synthetic or semi-synthetic version of Olibra into a pharmaceutical — which would enhance the value of Scotia's "safety technology".

Scotia also plans this year to begin development of another light-activated drug, related to Foscan, which will allow it to treat ovarian and liver cancers. Foscan will be filed with regulators in September.

The company is using its lipid expertise to help Roche reformulate one of its marketed, but poorly absorbed, drugs. Dr Dow hopes to win similar drug delivery deals this year.

Genghis Lloyd-Harris, biotech analyst at Credit Suisse First Boston, acknowledged Scotia's progress but is concerned that Foscan, as a palliative treatment, will struggle to command a good price. He believes that Olibra's potential is "nebulous" and that the General Mills deal will produce royalties of only "a few million".

Losses fell from £20.7 million to £18.6 million in 1998, helped by an £8.6 million one-off profit on the sale of the Efamol nutritional business.



Alastair Deakin, left, Hewden Stuart's finance director, and Alastair Napier, chief executive, unveiling results yesterday

Hewden Stuart disappoints

SHARES in Hewden Stuart fell yesterday after the crane and plant hire company reported annual results weaker than City analysts had expected (Adam Jones writes).

The group, based in Glasgow, reported pre-tax profits of £41.3 million for its year to January 31, up from £38.6 million the previous year. Earnings

per share rose nearly 5 per cent, to 10.5p, but analysts had been expecting about 11p. The shares dipped from 146p to 134½p, undermining a recent rally.

Sales fell from £296.3 million to £279.7 million, reflecting disposals made during the year. Hewden Stuart received £15 million for a variety of

businesses, including its merchandising arm and Scottish quarries, but booked a loss of £0.8 million on the deals.

Hewden Stuart now has about 240 tool hire shops, about 60 less than HSS, the UK market leader. It will continue to expand in the South of England, away from its traditional base in Scotland and

the North of England. The group said that it is cautiously optimistic on current-year trading. Alastair Napier, chief executive, said interest rate cuts had restored confidence, except in manufacturing.

A 2.75p final dividend makes a total of 3.95p (3.6p).

Tempus, page 28

Bell says Net is 'next big thing'

BY ROBERT LEA

E-COMMERCE and website design are the next big things in corporate communications, according to Lord Bell, the public relations executive who runs Chime Communications.

Lord Bell, reporting a 21 per cent rise in earnings per share to 4.6p for 1998, said the group would continue its policy of looking for businesses that increase the range of services that it can offer its customers.

Software development for corporate websites on the Internet and advice to clients on e-commerce strategies are areas that Lord Bell said Chime would be investing in.

Pre-tax profits more than

doubled to £8.3 million last year on the back of a first full-year inclusion of HHCL, the advertising agency. HHCL enabled Chime to lift group operating margins to 16 per cent, up from 13 per cent.

In comparison, Bell Pottinger, its public relations agency, was much flatter. Its operating profits were up by just £28,000 on the year, at £3.45 million with margins at 11.5 per cent, though Lord Bell said the figure came after £750,000 spent on rebranding the business (formerly known as Lowe Bell) and website costs.

A final 1.52p dividend gives a total of 2.22p, up 17 per cent.

Power firms to fund green fuel

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

POWER COMPANIES face a shake-up in the way green energy is funded as the burden is removed from the consumer and passed to parts of the industry.

At present renewable energy is funded through a 0.5 per cent levy on energy bills. But new plans from the Government will shift the funding to either supply companies or distribution businesses.

The reforms are part of a drive to boost green energy to 10 per cent of electricity supply by 2010, which will be helped by extra government cash. The Government will raise its green energy budget from £1.1 million to £18 million a year in

three years. There will also be tax breaks for research and development work on renewable forms of energy such as wind farms and solar and wave power. At present renewable energy is just 2 per cent of power.

John Battle, Energy Minister, said that the initiative was fundamental to Britain's ability to meet greenhouse gas targets and also to put the country in a strong worldwide position in green energy development.

The switch in funding is intended to share responsibility for funding green energy as the industry is changed by competition, bringing in new companies.

Highland Distillers toasts £200m venture

BY ROBERT LEA

HIGHLAND Distillers is to team up with Remy Cointreau of France and the US group Jim Beam Brands in a £200 million (£200 million) joint venture to market and distribute its brands around the world.

The alliance will see brands such as The Famous Grouse and The Macallan Scotch whiskeys marketed through a single, global, distribution company alongside the likes of Remy Martin cognac, Jim Beam bourbon and Piper-Heidsieck champagne. The venture will cover all big markets outside the US. Each of the partners will be putting £100 million into the venture.



Brian Ivory, left, and finance director Jamie Wilson hailed deal

Brian Ivory, Highland's chairman, called the deal a "win-win-win" arrangement which will significantly reduce costs and increase sales. Highland yesterday reported

pre-tax profits in the six months to the end of February down by 6 per cent to £23.5 million. The interim dividend rises to 2.3p (2.2p).

Hamleys to end Debenhams link

BY MARTIN BARROW

HAMLEYS, the toy retailer, is set to sever its ties with Debenhams because of poor trading at its 48 House of Toys in-store concessions.

The House of Toys agreement ends next February, and discussions between Hamleys and Debenhams about the future of the partnership will take place shortly.

However, yesterday Chris Ash, the Hamleys chief executive, said the group would substantially reduce the number of House of Toys concessions this year. In 1998 the concession operation suffered a 15 per cent fall in like-for-like sales and saw profits fall to £300,000 (£700,000).

Hamleys, of which Howard Dyer is

chairman, reported a fall in group pre-tax profits to £6.4 million last year (£7.6 million). Earnings fell to 20.1p a share (22p).

Mr Ash admitted that the company had suffered "a disappointing year". Trading was unlikely to materially improve in the first half of the current year as a £4 million refurbishment of its flagship Regent Street store in London depresses sales.

The building work started in February and will end in June. Hamleys is reconfiguring the ground floor to reduce congestion and improve access to the basement. Mr Ash said building work would be completed in time to support a strong build-up to the crucial Christmas season.

Hamleys has also suffered problems integrating Toystock, the retailing business

bought in 1997. Like-for-like sales by Toystock were down 13 per cent, compared with an 8 per cent rise in the contribution from Hamleys branded stores. Total group turnover rose 4.2 per cent to £47.9 million.

Hamleys is holding the total dividend at 11p a share with an unchanged 7.7p final. The shares yesterday fell 2½p to 145p.

That compares with a 12-month high of 296½p and a record high of 439½p in 1997. The decline in the group's fortunes and its poor share price have raised questions about Mr Ash's role within Hamleys. Yesterday Mr Ash said he continued to enjoy the full backing of the board. He said: "I haven't been under any pressure [to quit]. The pressure I am under is to produce better results and that is what I intend to do."



Dyer: dividend maintained



UNILEVER N.V.

Rotterdam The Netherlands

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS

On Tuesday, 4th May, 1999 at 10.30 uhr, in the "Jurianse Zaal" of the "Concert- en Congresgebouw de Doelen", entrance Schouwburgplein 50, Rotterdam

AGENDA

1. Consideration of the Annual Report for the 1998 financial year submitted by the Board of Directors.
2. Approval of the Annual Accounts for the 1998 financial year.
3. Adoption of the Annual Accounts and appropriation of the profit for the 1998 financial year.
4. Appointment of Auditors charged with the auditing of the Annual Accounts for the 1999 financial year.
5. Designation, in accordance with Articles 98 and 99a of Book 2 of the Netherlands Civil Code, of the Board of Directors as the company body authorised in respect of the issue of shares in the Company.
6. Authorisation, in accordance with Article 98 of Book 2 of the Netherlands Civil Code, of the Board of Directors to purchase shares in the Company and depositary receipts thereof.
7. Declaration of special dividend with ten cents cumulative preference share alternative end ordinary share capital consolidation.
8. Appointment of the members of the Board of Directors.
9. Questions.

This agenda, the Report and Accounts for 1998 and an Information Memorandum with respect to the proposals of agenda item 7, are available for inspection by shareholders and holders of depositary receipts for shares issued by N.V. Nederlandsche Administratie- en Trustkantoor at the Company's office, Vleugel 455, Rotterdam, and at the office of the Bank mentioned below, where copies may be obtained free of charge.

(A) Holders of bearer shares wishing to attend the meeting either in person or by proxy appointed in writing must deposit their share certificates by Tuesday, 27th April, 1999 at the Company's office or at the office of the Midland Securities Services, Client Delivery, Midland Bank plc, Mariner House, Pepys Street, London EC4N 4DA or any of its branches. Upon production of the receipt then issued to them such holders will be admitted to the meeting.

(B) Holders of registered shares for which certificates have been issued in another form and holders of booked shares wishing to attend the meeting either in person or by proxy appointed in writing must notify the Company of their intention by letter, stating the numbers of the share certificates or of the bookings for the shares, which must reach N.V. Algemeen Nederlands Trustkantoor ANT, P.O. Box 11063, 1000 GB Amsterdam, the Netherlands, by Tuesday, 27th April 1999.

(C) Holders of depositary receipts for shares in Unilever N.V. issued by N.V. Nederlandsche Administratie- en Trustkantoor of Amsterdam, "Nedamtrust depositary receipts", wishing to attend the meeting without taking part in the voting must deposit such depositary receipts by Tuesday, 27th April, 1999 at any of the offices mentioned in (A) above. Upon production of the receipt then issued to them, such Nedamtrust depositary receipts holders will be admitted to the meeting.

(D) If holders of the depositary receipts mentioned in (C) above wish to exercise voting rights at the meeting either in person or by proxy appointed in writing, N.V. Nederlandsche Administratie- en Trustkantoor will authorise them to exercise the voting rights in respect of the shares which are held by N.V. Nederlandsche Administratie- en Trustkantoor and for which the depositary receipts have been issued to these holders in accordance with the conditions of administration of these depositary receipts. For such purposes holders must by Tuesday, 27th April, 1999 surrender their depositary receipts for FL 1 or a multiple thereof (but, in the case of depositary receipts for 7% cumulative preference shares, representing a total nominal amount of FL 1,000 or a multiple thereof to N.V. Nederlandsche Administratie- en Trustkantoor, Herengracht 420, Amsterdam). The depositary receipts so surrendered must be accompanied by a form obtainable free of charge from N.V. Nederlandsche Administratie- en Trustkantoor, Amsterdam. Upon production of the receipts then issued holders will be admitted to the meeting.

Rotterdam, 31st March, 1999

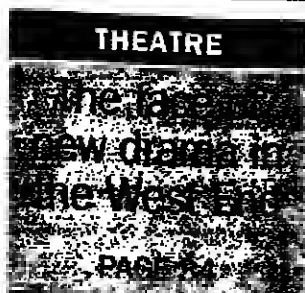
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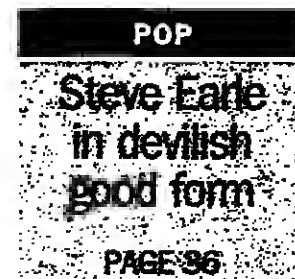
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THE TIMES ARTS



VISUAL ART: Richard Cork celebrates the art of Rogier van der Weyden on the 600th anniversary of his birth



One of the greatest works of Western religious art: five of the nine panels that make up Rogier van der Weyden's *Last Judgment*, originally positioned high on the chapel wall in Beane's Hôtel-Dieu, in full view of the "poor invalids"

No biblical subject is more fearsome than the Last Judgment, and hospital patients today would never be expected to confront it from their sickbeds. But Nicholas Rolin, a 15th-century Chancellor of the Duchy of Burgundy, decided that the Hôtel-Dieu he had founded for "poor invalids" at Beane would contain an altarpiece on this harrowing theme. He approached Rogier van der Weyden, a highly esteemed master based in Brussels, to tackle the subject for the hospital chapel. The outcome, Rogier's largest and most elaborate surviving work, was probably completed in 1451 when the chapel was officially dedicated. And now, in the sixth century of his birth, it seems appropriate during Easter week to see how he produced one of the greatest Last Judgments in Western art.

Still preserved in the Hôtel-Dieu, Rogier's painting was once positioned startlingly close to the hospital's ailing occupants. The chapel stood at the end of a monumental hall, the Salle des Pauvres, where inmates' beds were placed carefully enough to guarantee patients a view of the awesome work provided for their contemplation.

Rolin insisted on exposing his invalids to a high altarpiece that does nothing to minimise the fate meted out to sinners on Judgment Day. The God who presides with such commanding authority over the central panel wears an expression of uncompromising melancholy. Although the Latin inscription on the left side of God declares "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world", the other side carries a far more vehement message: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels". The sky is irradiated with an apocalyptic glow, and neither God nor Saint Michael beneath intends to be deflected from his duties.

Like his divine master, the saint stares directly out of the picture as he weighs two naked figures on scales bearing the words "virtues"

and "sins" respectively. The virtuous soul is raised higher than his erring counterpart, who reacts with horror as he sinks towards the region of the damned. Four angels reinforce the momentousness of the task by blowing vigorously on trumpets so elongated that two of them extend into the side panels.

The occupants of the hospital beds would have found nothing to comfort them in the right half of the altarpiece, where naked sinners cower and weep as they wander across a barren landscape towards hell. One figure thrusts up a beseeching arm towards the circle of saints above, who raise their hands in acknowledgement of the terror awaiting the damned. A hapless woman is tagged violently downwards by her hair, while her companions scream with anguish as they plummet to their doom.

Rogier reserves the full horror of divine retribution for the outermost

panel, where the saints are represented only by the tail-end of some crimson drapery. The heavenly clouds move to one side, and reveal a terminal blackness enveloped by flames erupting viciously from the rocks below. Into this inferno tumble the howling victims of God's displeasure, their flesh already ignited in places by the heat that will perpetually assail them.

Might the patients have felt unduly distressed by the immediacy and frankness of *The Last Judgment*? Rogier's main composition would have been familiar to them from the Gothic tympanum reliefs that provided him with precedents. The truth is that citizens of 15th-century Europe were accustomed to surveying images of the harrowing of Hell. Such visions could be found in the stained-glass windows embellishing medieval

churches, and religious education necessitated prolonged meditation on the significance of the Dies Irae. It was regarded as a salutary experience, and many of the invalids in the Salle des Pauvres might even have found comfort when they gazed at Rogier's masterpiece. Looking up in prayer at the terror confronting the people God rejected, they may well have been prompted to conclude that their own plight entailed less suffering. Besides, they undoubtedly appreciated their proximity to the chapel, for religious feelings were at their most heightened among those confronted by the prospect of death.

Moreover, if patients had already made peace with their God, they would probably identify more with the optimistic scenes on the other side of *The Last Judgment*. For here, aided by the intercession of the Virgin seated at the rainbow's base, humanity approaches

the full redemptive grace of a Christian Heaven. Even though Rogier invests their attenuated bodies with as much northern vulnerability as their counterparts in Hell, they emerge from their graves with an unmistakable sense of wonder. One woman is so eager to kneel and offer thanks to God that she has to be coaxed gently towards Paradise by a companion whose foot has already crossed over a frame into the next panel. Resurrecting figures are still emerging from the cracked earth even there, but only a few steps are needed to reach the ministering attentions of a guardian angel at the gates of Heaven, where the entrance columns are embellished with ripe grapes.

The contrast between the gleaming gold architecture of this panel, and the flame-filled void at the other end of *The Last Judgment*, could hardly be more poignant. While the penumbral depths promise nothing but despair and excruciating torment, the Gothic archway leading to Heaven offers shelter, light and aesthetic magnificence.

However much sustenance the patients may have derived from such an imposing painting, though, Rogier's vision is undeniably solemn. His stern emphasis on the ultimate moment either of absolution or retribution has an awesome finality, and on the outer wings his donor portraits likewise assume expressions of the utmost gravity. Identifiable from their coats of arms, each held by an angel floating behind, Chancellor Rolin and his wife Guigone de Salins pray before devotional texts. Rolin died ten years after the consecration of the Beane chapel at the reputed age of 86, and Guigone retired to Beane. Eight years later she died at the Hôtel-Dieu, and was buried according to her wishes before the altar where *The Last Judgment* was displayed. In her eyes, then, it must have offered the positive hope of salvation to come.

● Hôtel-Dieu, Beane (00 33 03 80344500). A small exhibition, including several of Rogier's other paintings, is in Room 1 of the National Gallery (0171-639 3321) until July 4

John Russell Taylor reviews a revealing new V&A show of treasures from the sub-continent

Sikhs in splendour

The European preoccupation with the physical age of things can be a great impediment to our appreciation of much Asian art. Of course, incomprehension can be advantageous. How many visitors who go into ecstasies over Bangkok temple architecture realise that it is all 19th-century, and seen in any

other context would probably be dismissed as Victorian pinchebeck?

Most of the art on show at the Victoria and Albert Museum in *The Arts of the Sikh*

Kingdoms is little (if at all) older. After all, the Sikh Kingdoms of the Punjab were a 19th-century creation, lasting only from the proclamation of Ranjit Singh as the first Sikh

Maharaja of the Punjab in 1801 to the annexation of the Punjab by Britain in 1849. If we are looking for objects that are cherished primarily because of their antiquity, we shall be disappointed.

On the other hand there is much to admire in a long tradition so closely yet creatively maintained. In much Eastern architecture what we are admiring is akin to W.G. Grace's original cricket bat — which stayed with him all his life, even though it had numerous replacements of blade and handle. Similarly, in the Orient rotten wood is replaced and flaking mural repainted whenever necessary, but the essential remains.

Even the most famous Sikh monument in the Punjab — the Golden Temple, or Harmandir, at Amritsar — is the end product of many enlargements and enrichments. But if the structure we see is fairly new, the idea behind it goes right back to the foundation of Sikhism as we know it with Guru Gobind Singh's initiation of his nearest disciples into the Khalsa (Order of the Pure) 300 years ago.

Does the Harmandir take us close to the centre of Sikh art? Not exactly. Indeed, it is doubtful if such a thing as specifically Sikh art exists at all. The Sikh court in Lahore was more of a meeting place of cultures than a standard-bearer for any particular culture. At the V&A the preliminary

rooms concern themselves with the arts in 17th and 18th-century Lahore, and therefore with Mogul culture. Much of the miniature painting is highly refined, with a typical Mogul mixture of rich materials and discretion in their use.

But the political rise of the Sikhs unfortunately coincided with the decline of art generally in the sub-continent. Muslim and Hindu artists were both in evidence in Ranjit Singh's court. And it sometimes seems that Hindu taste, running to lurid colouring and an excess of ornamentation, was always threatening to oust the more austere art of the Moguls.

The vulgarisation may well also have something to do with European influence. There is a clear parallel between the progression from Regency elegance to mid-Victorian clutter in the work of visiting artists, and that from pure Mogul at the start of the century to the bolted-sweet style of the later court artists.

Even at its best, then, much Sikh art is hybrid. But then, much is very beautiful. Some of the jewellery and metalwork may be too ornate even for tastes habituated to High Victorian elaboration, and it is disappointing that art proves to take us no nearer to a full understanding of the Sikh faith. But the flowering of Sikh court culture, though late and brief, was no less impressive for that, and has much to offer, even to us, even now.

● Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 (0171-938 8441) until July 25

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THEATRE

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Spoil us, Ambassadors

THEATRE: The Royal Court's temporary home has big plans, writes Benedict Nightingale

There is nothing critics enjoy more than a good moan about the West End, and, God knows, that grimy parish has given us plenty of cause for ritual ululation in the 1990s. Remember the time, just a few years ago, when every other show was a cut-rate cabaret celebrating the works of some dead songster? But suddenly, disconcertingly, reviewers are having to change our tune. I can barely recall a time when those seemingly supernatural playhouses were more hospitable to bold drama and audiences with unconventional tastes.

The omens were there when, early last year, Patrick Marber's sharp, scathing *Closer*, Ben Elton's provocative *Popcorn*, Alan Ayckbourn's not-unserious *Things We Do for Love* and the play by Mark Ravenhill with the unprintable name and daunting sexual content were clustered together in Shaftesbury Avenue's four prime theatres. Then the Almeida brought Racine and Gorky to the Albany, and Stoll Moss staged Theatre de Complicité's *Street of Crocodiles* at Queen's and transferred Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen* to the Duchess. And all along the Royal Court used its exile from Chelsea to present new plays at the Duke of York's and the Ambassadors.

But wait. The Court is packing its bags in readiness for the opening of its expensively renovated headquarters this autumn. Although Conor McPherson's *Weir* will continue its run at the Duke of York's, Mick Mahoney's *Sacred Heart* closes at the Ambassadors on April 24. Won't there be an awful gap at the theatre where the company has presented more than 30 new plays in 30 months? Won't there be a hole in the West End itself?

Quite the contrary. The Court has had what may well be a lasting impact on the West End's meteorology. It has shown the producers and theatre owners that audiences will come into the crowded centre of London and queue for returns to see plays without celebrity authors or star names propping them up: Martin McDonagh's *Beauty Queen of Leenane*, Richard Bean's *Toast*, Ayub Khan-Din's *East*



Sonia Friedman of the Ambassador Theatre Group intends to storm in where conventional producers fear to tread

is *East*, Nick Grosso's *Real Classy Affair* — and Ravenhill's unnamable study of rent-boy culture, which was at the Ambassadors before moving to the Queen's.

The Court can surely take some credit for the Oxford Stage Company's decision to transfer Robert Holman's *Making Noise Quietly* and Chekhov's *Three Sisters* to the Whitehall this spring and the determination of its director, Dominic Dromgoole, to ensure that other not-obviously-commercial work follows. Similarly with Stoll Moss's still-secret plan to do something very exciting in the West End this autumn. But the Court's success is clearly the key reason why, even after it has been restored to the commercial sector, the one-time home of *The Mousetrap* can be rechristened the New Ambassadors and continue to offer highly eclectic plays.

"I want to do the same sort of work, with the same integrity and values, that I did in the

subsidised sector," says Sonia Friedman, who is the producer of the Ambassador Theatre Group and was the co-founder of Out of Joint, the company which joined the Court in staging Ravenhill's play and Caryl Churchill's brilliant *Blue Heart*. "This means commissioning and producing plays, inviting in touring troupes, and staging fringe or regional work that conventional London producers have found too risky; and limiting each run to four or six weeks."

Within a month of the Court's exit the Ambassadors should have lost its bizarre alterations — one stage in the old balcony, another in the cellarage — and got back its original auditorium. On April 24 Friedman opens *Holy Mothers*, a play about eccentric oldsters by Werner Schwab, and follows it with Frantic Assembly's latest mix of words, music and physical derring-do, *Sell Out*. Then

comes Khan-Din's *Last Dance at Dum Dum*, about the Anglo-English in Calcutta; then Out of Joint with both Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroids* and *Drummers*. Simon Bennett's first-time play about jewellery theft, then Shared Experience's adaptation of *Jane Eyre*. Future probabilities include *Arise* by Jim Cartwright, author of *Little Voice*, and a revival of the late Sarah Kane's horrifying *Blasted*.

Friedman wants to fill some slots so far ahead that touring companies can plan their peregrinations, but will leave others open, in the hope that this will bring Central London well-received plays that now disappear after brief runs in subsidised theatres. Bryony Lavery's *Frozen*, a three-hand-er about child murder much admired at Birmingham Rep last year, would be an obvious choice. "Some of the best work gets missed," says Friedman. "It's not fair on writers, performers, regional theatres or audiences."

Is it fiscally feasible? Since wages will be modest, marketing will be centralised and visiting shows will not need financing from scratch, Friedman thinks so. If she fills just over half the Ambassadors' 400 seats, its seasons should break even. But will it attract Cottesloe or Bush habitués? That is answered not only by the Court's record at the Ambassadors, but by Ravenhill's West End triumph. Morning after morning came with 500 seats still to sell, and night after night ended up sold out.

"And the age of the audience was extraordinary — 23 or 24 on average," says Friedman. Surely that's significant. With no seat more than £20, and some maybe as low as £10, the New Ambassadors should bring in cinemagoers and punters with a distaste for booking ahead, the casual, the carefree and the young. And if that's so, the future of commercial British theatre would seem less gloomy than the fatalists and critics like to claim.

Doing overtime in the fun factory

Daniel Rosenthal takes a tour of Robert Lepage's extraordinary multimedia arts headquarters in Quebec

A derelict fire station in Quebec City, on the banks of the Saint Lawrence River, has been transformed into a unique factory which imports artists and performers from North America and Europe and exports plays, films, operas and websites.

Some of the products take only a few weeks to manufacture, others evolve over several years, but they all bear the same hallmark: "Made in the mind of Robert Lepage". The high walls of La Caserne have housed Lepage's company, Ex Machina, since 1997, although its first new products are only just reaching Britain. Lepage's low-budget feature film *Nô*, based on his epic play *Seven Streams of the River Ota*, which shuttles back and forth between Osaka and Montreal, goes on release early next month. And *Geometry of Miracles*, a three-hour devised piece spanning 30 years in the life of the visionary architect Frank Lloyd Wright, opens in Glasgow tomorrow, then moves to the National Theatre.

Opened in 1910, the old fire station had been abandoned for a decade when Quebec City's Mayor offered to let it to Ex Machina, and the £3 million conversion created a building tailor-made to the company's requirements. A quick tour with Ex Machina producer Michel Bernatchez takes you through offices, set workshops, rehearsal studios, dressing rooms, digital editing suites and a multimedia department, all situated around the studio space. At about 3,500 cubic metres this approximates to many of the international stages which receive Ex Machina shows, and doubles as a film studio.

Before setting at La Caserne, says Lepage, the members of Ex Machina were too widely dispersed, with temporary production offices all over the globe. Lepage spent months away from his home and colleagues in Quebec City whenever he took on a freelance directing job.

Now he asks overseas theatres to send over their actors, rehearses with them at La Caserne, then takes the production "home". That happened last year with a company from the Stockholm-based Swedish National Theatre, who flew in to work on *La Cestina* by Fernando de Rojas. "Actors who work for big insti-

tutional companies in Europe tell me that they don't normally have time to explore new approaches," says Lepage. "But we have a very different set of rules at La Caserne and the Swedes responded very well."

He wants La Caserne to be "a playground" for actors, musicians, singers, designers — anyone creative. Their contributions to one production should feed others, as is happening at the moment with Lepage's latest show, *Technological Cabaret*, scheduled to open in Switzerland in August. Visual artists from France and Austria have collaborated on installation-like revue pieces with actors from Quebec, and their work has directly influenced the structure of *Hotel*, a French-language drama series Lepage is developing for Canadian television.

Colleagues such as the multimedia specialist Veronique Couturier, who created the interactive *Nô* website (www.metamorphoses.symphonie.ca), enthuse about La Caserne's stimulating, inter-disciplinary environment. Jean Bourgaud, the director of *Mirage Multi-Media*, a small firm which rents La Caserne's editing suites, relishes the freedom Lepage has given him to experiment on back projections for a recent Ottawa production of *The Tempest*, or animated sequences for a forthcoming play.

It sounds like an idyllic creative set-up — particularly since it should ease the problems posed by the logistical requirements of Ex Machina's numerous co-production partners. Lepage's work is so popular internationally that a remark-

able 75 per cent of Ex Machina's operating budget has been provided by venues such as the National and Glasgow's Tramway.

These large theatres must fix deadlines months in advance, while Lepage thrives on collaborative methods in which shows develop "organically". "Bringing together Robert's way of working and our production partners' needs can be a nightmare," admits Bernatchez. "Last year, one European theatre had two weeks of downtime in its workshop because we were not able to send them set designs in time. They were paying their men to sit and smoke cigarettes."

"Our partners give us large sums of money and have high expectations, but we can end up with a catastrophe like *Elisabete* [the notorious glitch forced the last-minute cancellation of Lepage's solo version of *Hamlet* at the 1997 Edinburgh Festival]."

Lepage agrees that Ex Machina "may not yet have the right balance" in its volume, but says the characteristic variety of its output should blossom in the next couple of years. "We've been neglecting the aura which creates the unpredictability in our work." That aura "needs to be nurtured in the proper environment", and at La Caserne, he believes, the environment is just about perfect.

● *Nô* is released on April 9. A Robert Lepage season runs at the National Film Theatre (0171-928 3222) April 1-8. *Geometry of Miracles* is at three Glasgow venues from now until April 3 (0141-287 3000), then the Lyttelton Theatre (0171-452 3000) April 14-21.



Robert Lepage (left) and colleagues at work in La Caserne

Abba Pater

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City of Birmingham Touring Opera has an excellent record for reaching those parts that other companies don't reach, but then it is easy to see why it does not hang around its home base: the Mayfair Suite of Birmingham's Bull Ring Centre is one of the country's most unprepossessing opera venues. At least in CBTO's new production of *The Two Widows* the place is transformed by Jon Morrell's atmospheric set, evoking a small estate deep in the Czech countryside.

In spite of a polka-infused score, Smetana's fifth opera is the only one he drew from a non-Czech source (Mallefille's farce *Les Deux Veuves*). In Zün-

Scoring tops for music

two widowed cousins, Karolina and Anzka, the latter guiltily mourning a husband she didn't love and so repressing her feelings for Ladislav, whose attempts at wooing provide comic diversion.

As in *The Bartered Bride*, Smetana eventually revised this opera by turning the spoken dialogue into recitative; he also added two minor characters to the original four, plus a chorus. CBTO's version cleverly goes back to the original structure. Since that dialogue is apparently no longer available, Graham Vick has provided his own, and it chimes in well with the singing translation of David Pountney and Leonard Hancock. Done this way, the work seems much lighter than it did in ENO's clodhopping production of a few seasons ago.

CBTO has an honourable tradition of performing works



in reduced orchestrations, and this production's masterstroke lies in the music's arrangement for piano quintet. Christopher Willis's reduction brings to mind Smetana's invigorating chamber music and, more especially, the glorious Piano Quintet by Dvorak. It would be impossible to preserve all the orchestral excitement, and there were times when the playing, led by Willis from the piano, might have been better, but the tunes worked all their beguiling magic.

Not everything is on the same chamber scale. Vick's

production is a little blunt, and involves some byplay with the musicians, who are seated on stage in period (in this case Edwardian) dress. Much of the singing is unsuitable, with the tenor (David Owen) in the difficult role of Ladislav apparently pitching for the upper gallery of Prague's National Theatre. The other singing less ear-splittingly, though Kate Flower's vivacious Karolina sounds squally. Beverley Mills provides a touching portrait of the confused Anzka, but Michael Druett is too broad as the gamekeeper Murnal. There's the framework here for a much more charming show.

JOHN ALLISON

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament: ALEX WILSON

Profession: Jazz pianist. Age: 27.

Where can we hear him? On April 9 he leads his own band through its jazz-salsa pieces at the Tabernacle, Notting Hill.

So he's got the Latin bug? Absolutely. He has just returned from Havana, where he recorded his second album for the distinctive London label. Candid. His debut, *Afro-Sax*, on, added a salsa tinge to tunes like *Nature Boy* and attracted stirring reviews.

Why *Afro-Sax*? It reflects his own heritage. His father, a former computer programmer with the UN, is of Sierra Leonean descent. As well as a brief early stay in the former colony, Wilson spent much of his childhood in Vienna and Geneva. He still regrets not having paid a visit to the Montreux Jazz Festival when he lived near by.

A citizen of the world then? "I'm not out to say I'm an African pianist. I know about Sier-



ra Leone's culture, but more from talking to friends and family than from direct experience. I'm just trying to express a multicultural, mixed-race philosophy in my music. Cuba is a lot more at ease with that heritage than London."

Did he follow the usual academic path? No, he's self-taught, having started on clas-

sical guitar before taking up the piano in earnest at 17. After studying for an electronics degree at York University he began paying his dues in London clubs five years ago, and managed to get turned down for a place on the Guildhall jazz course.

So playing Latin music helped to pay the bills? Exactly. He eventually made his breakthrough on the jazz front when he joined Gary Crosby's award-winning Nu Troop.

What next? The new album is out at the end of the year, and he has been working on his business skills on a production course co-funded by the London Arts Board. "My main goal is just to stay focused. I've had to play all sorts of styles in the past, and it's still always tempting to do a bit of everything. And I want to make sure I keep fighting to find time for my piano-playing. It's as simple as that."

CLIVE DAVIS

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DESIGN

Oxford's new theatre

ARTS

CONCERTS

Spotlight on the brass

ARCHITECTURE: Marcus Binney sees old and new blending perfectly in Oxford's Magdalen College extension

Marriage across the centuries

Architects who successfully rebel against the prevailing orthodoxy deserve attention. And few have done it more systematically than Demetri Porphyrios, whose classical theatre at Magdalen College, Oxford, has just opened, so pure and crisp it could stand comfortably in Ancient Athens.

It stands not in temple-like isolation, but embedded in a new college quadrangle that is hardly different from those built by Oxford masons 500 years ago. Porphyrios is not an apostle of formal classical design with its emphasis on symmetry, but a passionate believer in the Eng-

lish picturesque tradition, with its sense of informality and accretive growth. He connects not so much with Greek temple architecture as with the looser pattern of the Greek agora or marketplace.

His first principle is that "a building should not be as large as the commission". Put another way, an architect should respond to his brief not with one large building but with several smaller ones.

He also believes passionately that the old ways, not today's high-tech, offer the eco-friendly, low-energy approach. "High-tech architects go for steel and glass but look at the fuel burnt up in their manufacture and the energy consumed in air-conditioning glass buildings," he says.

The theatre provides a second entrance to the college off Longwall Street, looking straight into Magdalen's delightful deer park. This view is framed by an open octagonal entrance porch (a tribute to the ancient Temple of the Winds in Athens).

While Modernists express horror at copying the past, Porphyrios enthusiastically seeks a precedent for everything he does. When it asks



A return to traditional architectural values: Demetri Porphyrios's new addition to Magdalen College, Oxford, with the classically inspired theatre on the left and the accommodation block on the right

why mouldings are shaved away on the portals he replies: "You'll find it at Pergamon."

His Greek blood also shows in the joy at unbroken expanses of smooth stonework. An English architect, seeking to blend with Oxford tradition, might have run drip mouldings between the storeys, matching the college's 15th-century buildings.

The new 200-seat theatre (a double cube) is not a variant of the open-air Greek theatre with its tiers of curving seats, but of the Ancient Greek Odion. These were small covered theatres for 200 to 300 people with steeply raked seats on three sides, allowing plays to be

staged in the round. At Magdalen, where the theatre will be used mainly for lectures, the seats face the stage, though the front two rows can be set at right angles to create a sense of enclosure.

The college initially approached 14 architects but whittled the list down to a choice between Porphyrios and the "advanced Gothic" of Ian Ritchie, with exposed stainless steel rods and cast metal and stone facades. "The dons gave Ritchie, who also mightily impressed them, the commission for a sleek new building on the Magdalen Science Park outside Oxford," says Anthony Smith, the President of Magdalen. "Both the junior and

the middle common rooms came out overwhelmingly in favour of Porphyrios. It seemed to me that some of my colleagues, torn by two radically different approaches, were influenced by the strength of the student preference." Porphyrios appealed, said Smith, because "he fully grasped the nature of the Oxford quadrangle with rooms opening off staircases, guarding privacy and creating a social unit."

By the time the new quadrangle is completed, it will have provided nearly 100 rooms and sets of rooms for students and tutors. Magdalen needs these rooms because the days of cheap student digs are over and, like other colleges, it feels obliged to

offer full housing to both graduates and undergraduates. Comfortable accommodation (with en suite facilities) lets for much better rates to conferences in the vacations.

The theatre also serves as a recital room. "Oxford abounds in wonderful auditoriums that are excruciatingly uncomfortable," says Smith. "Every year we have one or two students who are serious performers."

Magdalen also hosts many special events. "Simon Callow launched his one-man Oscar Wilde show here. We have had Ian Bostridge, Britain's leading young tenor; Robin Blaze, the counter-tenor; and the cellist Lynn Harrell.

Mark Milhofer, who sang in the college choir and is now singing in Italian opera houses, will perform in the new auditorium on May 14.

"I hope to do *Napoleon* with live music. We are also showing a series of films of Ancient Greek drama productions."

Undergraduate societies, vocal and instrumental groups can use the new theatre. The tall barrel-roofed foyer will be used for art exhibitions. "The idea is that the artists also show videos of their work in the theatre," adds Porphyrios.

The picturesque appeal of his design is heightened by the retention, within a few feet of the new buildings, of two magnificent trees. To

avoid new foundations damaging the roots, Porphyrios carefully supported the corner of the building on a raft, irrigating the roots while construction proceeded.

More curious are the buttresses which he has inserted at angles in the corners between the theatre and the octagon. They look almost as if some stonework intended for the restoration of the college chapel has ended up here by mistake. Porphyrios will have none of it: "An entry is always framed by buttresses," he says, drawing the plan of a gateway into an Ancient Greek town. And round the corner, Magdalen's own belltower is there to prove him right.

A comprehensive blow-out

The 1999 London International Brass Festival at the Royal Academy of Music offered everything from Black Dyke to Birtwistle, from jazz Allen Vizzutti to the ubiquitous John Wallace, head of brass at the academy and co-director (with Philip Biggs) of the festival.

Among the repertoire were new works by both Birtwistle and Maxwell Davies. The title of the former's *Placid Mobile* for 36 trumpets gives notice that the piece exploits unconventional timbres of the instrument, even though it refers to Lake Placid in upstate New York, where Birtwistle was composer-in-residence in 1998. The atmosphere is indeed tranquil, with impressionistic clusters ranging from pianissimo to mezzo piano, against which streaks of tone are picked out.

As if the business of rounding up three dozen competent trumpeters (half were professionals, half students) were not difficult enough, the constraints on the instrument's natural propensities proved too



great to deliver anything like a flawless performance. But Birtwistle relishes setting his players a challenge, as was revealed in a discussion about another new work, *Silkhouse Tattoo*, to be premiered next month. Scored for two trumpets and percussion, *Silkhouse Tattoo* employs innovative techniques involving microtones and mutes, and has a potentially theatrical element deriving from the deployment around the stage of the two trumpeters. The preview of the finale given by John Wallace, Edward Carroll and Sam Walton suggested a more substantial piece than *Placid Mobile*.

Wallace candidly admitted that life had

been too short in the weeks since Maxwell Davies had presented him with *Litany for a Mind Chapel between Sheep and Shore* to master it in its entirety. He therefore gave just two of its 11 sections, standing off-stage in a balcony from where the music's evocative melodies floated down.

Maxwell Davies's *Sea Eagle* swoops and soars similarly, giving the horn student Evgeny Chebykin a chance to show his mastery of such techniques. The Maxwell Davies Trumpet Sonata is an earlier piece, whose furious virtuosity was fearlessly dispatched by Christopher Deacon. It had been thought that Victor Ewald's quintet were the earliest of their kind, but the newly discovered set by J.S. Bellon from the 1830s predates them by half a century. Their easygoing nature, heard in a pair led by Wallace on the key bugle, is what one might expect of pieces written for Parisian promenade concerts.

BARRY MILLINGTON

Silence to shout about



After a silence, it seems, eloquence. In its original version for violin and piano, John Casken's *Après un silence* was the first work he had completed in nine months. Whatever the reason for the silence, the release from it generates a surge of energy that is far from exhausted by the end: the last bars seem to have to impose a renewal of silence by cutting the violinist off in mid-flight.

Before conducting the new version of *Après un silence* for violin and chamber orchestra, Nicholas Kraemer chose to describe to the audience how it is divided into eight sections and, by means of tiny extracts from the score, how to identify them. It was a mistake, in terms of both presentation and explanation. The whole point of the work is that, although it is indeed constructed in eight sections, it is a compulsive continuity. Of course, there are changes in tempo and textural

perspective, recitative alternating with song, vigorous volubility with lyrical reflection, but all of them stimulated by the same unflinching impulse. In that most of the energy is carried through the violinist it must be an unusually daunting solo role but also, since it is so effectively written for the instrument, a rewarding one.

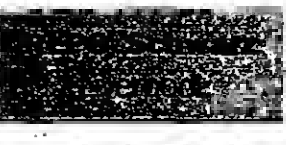
There is such variety and vehemence in *Après un silence* that, having heard it so persuasively performed by Kyra Humphries and the Northern Sinfonia, it is difficult to imagine how it could have been contained in its original violin and piano form.

The French title, the French section headings, the French tempo and expression markings presumably reflect something of Casken's source of inspiration here. Anyway, in consulting the rest of the programme, Nicholas Kraemer took the hint, preceding the new work with Henri Büsser's deplorable but irresistible arrangement of Fauré's *Après un Réve*, framing the whole thing in French Baroque and including two French classics.

The beginning of the first half, with empty cavernous gestures from Lully and a heavy-footed reading of Ravel's *Pavane pour une Infante défunte*, was depressing. The ending of the second half, with its fascinating selection of movements from Rameau's *Les Boréades*, was correspondingly refreshing.

GERALD LARNER

Into the comfort zone



It would be worth climbing a mountain with Richard Strauss to avoid being his house guest, writes Gerald Larner. But if it had to be the *Sinfonia Domestica* rather than the *Alpine Symphony* at the end of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's season of anniversary tributes to the composer, they could scarcely have made a better case for that quelling, argumentative, embarrassing and yet exhilarating slice of family life. Gerard Schwarz conducted it as though it really were a symphony, rather than a lapse in autobiographical taste, and succeeded in making his point.

Not the least impressive aspect of the Liverpool performance was the abundance of picturesque detail and the accomplishment of the orchestra in colouring it and phrasing it so expressively while at the same time balancing the textures with such consistent clarity. But no passing detail diverted

the conductor from his symphonic mission. His long-term structural purpose was evident from the start and he sustained it with a rare combination of calculation, determination and inspiration. Having worked together in a variety of repertoire over two weeks, Schwarz and the RLPO clearly have faith in each other, which in an extremity like this is of immense value in securing a fearless and authoritative performance.

In a soloist that quality of unquestionable certainty is largely a matter of experience. While there is little room for doubt about his virtuoso accomplishment and his estimate of the expressive purpose of Bruch's Violin Concerto in G minor, Matthew Trusler still lacks something of the self-assertive presence that commands unflinching attention. There is also the question of the size of the violin sound. But less than a year after playing the same work in the Bridgewater Hall, in the smaller space and more direct acoustics of the Philharmonic Hall he seemed to have developed more than a little in authority. To judge by the generous reaction of the audience, he does not have far to go to achieve full-scale heroic stature.

Schwarz's arrangement for string orchestra of Webern's early and solitary *Slow Movement* for string quartet proved to be attractive in its scoring even if, by depriving it of its intimacy, it did nothing to enhance its emotional effect.

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LISTINGS

Kiri in Glasgow

RECOMMENDED TODAY

Guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Mark Hargre

LONDON

ENDLESS PARADE. The largest and last of Radio 3's festivals under the umbrella heading 'Sounding the Century' surveys the diversity of post-war British music. For tonight's curtain-raiser, Andrew Davis conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus joined by the BBC Singers in a world premiere by Richard Cussion followed by works by Britten, Schelle and Tippett. With the baton Alan Opa, and Håkan Hardenberger, trumpet. Festival Hall (0171-930 4242). Tonight, 7.30pm. (S)

THE GIN GAME. Dorothy Tutin and Joss Ackland play old folk in a retirement home whose card-playing styles echo their sad lives. First Barbican drama a surprising Pulitzer Prize winner. Savoy (0171-836 8888). Opens tonight, 7pm. (S)

SACRED HEART. This is Mick Mahoney's new play where two second-generation Irish lads, brought up in NW3, meet again after years estranged. Edward Hall directs. Ambassadors (0171-555 5000). Opens tonight, 7pm. (S)

400 JOKES WITH THE DEVIL. Theatre Arts' touring edition of Eleanora's life and career, from the Oresteia to the 1990s. Includes footage of the film. Lisle Theatre, Walsby (0114-241 6701). Opens tonight, 7.30pm. (S)

ELSEWHERE

GLASGOW. Standing tickets only left for opera duo Jon Toivanen's first ever appearance at this venue. Adding to the evening's excitement the programme which will remain a secret until the show starts. Royal Concert Hall (0141-287 5511). Tonight, 7.30pm. (S)

NEW WEST END SHOWS

Jeremy Kingston's choice of theatre showing in London.
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□ **THE PRISONER OF SECOND AVENUE.** Richard Dreyfuss and Marsha Mason make their British stage debuts in Neil Simon's play about two city angst. Theatre Royal, Haymarket (0171-930 8800). (S)

□ **GOOD: C.P. Taylor's best play,** tracing a liberal professor's gradual descent into working with the Nazis. Charles Dance heads a strong cast. Michael Garratt directs. Dominion (0171-300 1723). (S)

□ **THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE.** Adrian Noble's spectacular production of the first Narnia adventure comes to town. Barbican (0171-638 8891). (S)

□ **GROSS INDEED.** The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde. Michael Pennington plays Wilde, with William Heward and Celia Francis as counsel for and against. In Michael Kaufman's play. Gielgud (0171-494 5905).

□ **CARD MOVES.** Even the poets who sack sack cards in phone boxes have dreams of bolshie themselves. Mike



Dorothy Tutin stars in *The Gin Game*. Savoy

LEEDS. A Game of Golf is the second of Ayckbourn's trilogy of comedies. Helen and Exchange, hanging on whether Celia smokes a cigarette or not. Here she finds chaos at the club. Courtyard (0113-213 7703). Premieres tonight, 7.45pm. (S)

□ **POOLE.** The Boumouthe Symphony Orchestra under Pinar Borgeaud opens the evening's concert with a work from the conductor's native Finland: Sibelius's symphonic fantasy Pohjola's Daughter. Michael Tippett's dynamic Concerto for Double String Orchestra and Dvorak's magnificent Seventh Symphony complete the programme. Poole Arts Centre (01202 685222). Tonight, 7.30pm. (S)

ARTS

The devil downed in Georgia

Johnny Cash may be the Man in Black, but Steve Earle is the incumbent shadowy spirit of Americana. His off-charted personal battles, played out in prison cells, drug dives and divorce courts, have threatened to obscure his exemplary fieldwork in the richest pastures of roots'n'roll. But without such internal strife, the wolfhound within Earle's inspiration would probably have had barely the bite of an ageing terrier.

Five marriages and many a recreational excess down the road, he has won back his self-respect without slackening off the creative tension. The result has been the best sequence of albums of his career, and every time you think you have the measure of his experimentation in folk, country and rock traditions, this Tasmanian Devil from Texas starts snarling in a new backyard.

Last month Earle released *The Mountain*, a remarkable collaboration with the noted family flag-bearers for bluegrass music, the Del McCoury Band. The improbable ensemble has been touring the United States ahead of a British tour in May, and treated visitors to Atlanta's Variety Playhouse to more than three hours at a crossroads where folk branched one way towards country and another towards elemental rock'n'roll. With long solo bouts for each act, two collaborative sets and an encore, it turned into a five-course feast.

The hulking, slouching, leather-jacketed Earle we knew was history,

POP

Steve Earle Atlanta

as we did a collective double-take at a neatly bearded, coiffured and clothed gentleman. But fire and brimstone in a jacket and de is still fire and brimstone, and Earle was still a compulsive frontman as we watched with almost guilty pleasure the 15-rounder taking place in his head to keep the demons at bay.

His demeanour was in the starkest contrast to the well-scrubbed McCourys, with whom he was soon huddling around a single microphone in a glorious acoustic scrum of fiddles and mandolins, recreating such highlights of the album as *Outlaw's Honkytonk* and *Harlan Man*. McCoury, an old-school showbiz charmer with a voice like a bluegrass Lonnie Donegan, led his boys through some rousing group numbers, including an amusing take on the Lovin' Spoonful's *Nashville Cats*.

Earle's solo stint included stops at both early and late career markers, his magnetism as a narrator underscored by gritty story songs like *Tanetown*. Riding with the McCoury wagon was about as likely as Hank Williams roaming with Pete Seeger, but sometimes whiskey and cream slip down a treat.

PAUL SEXTON



It's been a long, hard road for Steve Earle, but he's come out of it with some great music to his name

A whisper to a scream

As far as touring partners go, the noisy blues and rockers DEUS and Wigan's soul-searching balladeers Witness might not be the face of it, seem like an obvious combination. But when these two Island Records labelmates reached London for the final night of their short UK tour, the pairing seemed to make perfect sense to the capacity crowd in North London.

First on were Witness who, on the strength of a limited-edition seven-inch single released last November and a couple of connections with their hometown's more famous sons, the Verve, were widely touted as the band to watch in 1999. Much of that promise rests on the songwriting team of singer Gerard Starke and guitarist Ray Chan, with drums, bass and an additional guitarist/key-board player completing the line-up.

Anyone who heard the yearning balladry on their debut single, *Quarantine*, might have expected Witness to sit



around onstage or drag a stool on mid-set. Live, they quickly dispelled any such notion. You only had to hear the falsetto on the fragile, searching *Hijack*, which provided the highlight in their short set, to realise that Starke soars beyond verse/chorus/verse. Sonically and visually, Witness have a peculiar type of dark intensity that is difficult to sum up — but you could hear it in the arching, strung-out blues of their latest single, *Scars*, and see it in the relentless, unblinking stare on Starke's face.

Right now, Witness would seem to have far more in common with American country rockers — than their UK contemporaries. In that respect, there is a link between them and DEUS, a band long championed by REM who have never been easy to define.

Another five-piece — this time featuring guitars, drums, bass and violin/keyboards — DEUS took up a Captain Beefheartian mixture of noise and melody, funk and jazz, big blitzes of noise and spaced-out silences. Their eclectic approach was summed up early on in the set when *Sam Peckinpah's Daughter* was followed by *Everybody's Weird*, from their latest album, *The Ideal Crash*.

But given that there were reports of guitars being smashed onstage in an excess of rock'n'roll madness earlier in this tour, it took a while for DEUS to get fully into their stride. It was almost as if some energy exchange might have taken place with Witness — the soul-searchers had revved up and the noisy rockers had chilled out.

As it was, the pent-up energy simply built throughout the set, culminating in a monumental encore and an epic version of *Suds & Soda*.

ANN SCANLON

Drama by the pound

scorn on Sunday, draping his ample frame in a glitzy shirt and garish tartan trousers.

Musically, the band plundered three decades of pop, from psychedelia to glam rock to punk, without settling for long on any single style. A clutch of tunes, notably the early single *Same Band* and the savage *Fame Thing*, obeyed the classic pop rules of speed and brevity. But the majority of their compositions sprawled and swelled into mini-operas, each adorned by the baroque solos of the guitarist Richard Green. Ultrasound clearly delight in revisiting precisely those forbidden zones of rock which have been critical-

ly disdained by the independent music scene since Led Zepplin disbanded.

Significantly, though, this was no mere progressive rock revival show. First, the band's raucous and emotionally charged sound owed more to the timeless primal racket of garage rock than to the pseudo-classical 'pretensions' of 1970s supergroups. More importantly, Wood, singing not of goblins and wizards, but delivered swooningly romantic lyrics with the persuasive panache of a seasoned torch singer. Behind all the self-conscious allusions to rock history, their set was grounded in such direct expressions of love as their robustly traditional new single, *Flooded World*, or their ravaged heartbreak ballad, *Sentimental Song*.

While the novelty appeal of Wood's appearance and his band's more experimental leanings may soon fade, it is their flair for simple and evocative tunes which will decide their longevity in the rock marketplace. Fashion may merely be flirting with Ultrasound, but their best songs deserve a deeper commitment.

STEPHEN DALTON

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The property market is blossoming, fuelled by cheaper mortgages and the prospect of even lower interest rates, writes Rachel Kelly

Spring brings growth in house prices

The house had been on the market since Christmas. No amount of baking bread or roasting coffee beans had nudged buyers into making an offer.

But last week, as the magnolia buds opened and the cherry trees blossomed, not just one, but three offers came in quick succession, all at the asking price for the four-bedroom property in West London.

It makes no difference that the house in question is owned by my best friend. It's official: the housing market has picked up, says the Council of Mortgage Lenders.

Lending in February totalled \$6.4 billion, up from \$6.1 billion in January. Michael Coogan, the director-general, says: "In the light of current high levels of afford-

ability, we are cautiously optimistic that the housing market is experiencing the beginning of a modest upturn."

The main spur has been cheaper mortgage rates. Average variable rates on new loans were 6.4 per cent in February, compared to 6.53 per cent in January, and average fixed rates were 6.22 per cent (6.5 per cent in January).

"Cheaper mortgage rates as a result of February's rate cut are reflected in the latest figures," says Mr Coogan. "There are some very attractive fixed-rate deals on the market to suit those who are looking for payment certainty for a set period."

Having eased monetary policy for the past five months, the Bank of England left interest rates unchanged at its committee meeting this month. But



For sale signs are going up all over the country, but the property market in Harrogate, above, is recording above-average increases in home prices

the expectation is that rates will fall still lower as the UK prepares to join the euro.

Economic stability is playing its part, too. Surveys show that consumer and business confidence has improved in recent months, although activity is weak. This is in contrast to the world economic turmoil last summer, when fears of an

Asian meltdown hit City bonuses, the main drive to London house price rises.

Other property watchers confirm a rosier market. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) says in its quarterly report on the housing market that agents are more optimistic than at any time since early last summer.

Ian Perry, from RICS, says: "Prices traditionally strengthen around this time of year, but even allowing for the 'spring factor', the recovery in the market has been strong, bolstered by the optimism in supply and a lack of fresh houses coming up for sale."

London especially has seen a surge in the market. George Pope, from the agents John D Wood in Fulham, says: "In the higher price ranges potential sellers are becoming optimistic that values will rise further in the next few months, particularly if interest rates fall again."

Hotspots include Greenwich, where the Land Registry reports rises of 17.6 per cent over the past year. The borough has been boosted by the prospect of the Jubilee Line and the Docklands Light Railway extension.

In Chelsea, Kevin Ryan, from the agents Egertons, reports that there has been an increase in the number of inquiries, but no increase in the number of houses for sale. "This has led to unwelcome

gazumping, which we have seen twice this month. High prices are being offered which may not stand up to mortgage valuations."

Outside London, Rutland is another bright spot: the Land Registry reports prices are up 16.7 per cent over the past year. Banbury in Oxfordshire has gained from improved rail services: North Dorset has been boosted by the numbers of people working from home and schools such as Sherborne, Bournemouth, and Canford, and there is a golden triangle between Leeds, Harrogate and Wetherby.

However, the boom has been less pronounced in the Midlands and much of the North, where the market reflects the troubled, dying industries.

Overall, there is no such thing as one "housing market" but a series of micro-markets each influenced by a number of factors, not least the local employment prospects as well as supply and demand.

The Budget seems to have made no difference. Mr Perry says: "Most sales will escape the half per cent rise in stamp duty, but it may have some dampening effect at the top end of the housing market, especially in London."

True enough: £250,000 will buy only a relatively modest house in the South. In the past two years stamp duty payable on such a property has jumped from £2,500 to £6,250. Ultimately we have moved, albeit gradually, from an environment where housing was subsidised to one where it is taxed.

The Woolwich also reports a recovering market. About half of the estate agents, removal companies and solicitors who responded to the Woolwich's survey said that business had improved.

It also recorded a more stable market. "A significant pointer to this is the proximity of selling prices to asking prices," says Alan White, of the Woolwich. Estate agents say that 59.2 per cent of properties are selling within 5 per cent of the asking price.

SMART MOVES

Toad Hall for sale

■ CHURCH Cottage, the former home of Kenneth Grahame, author of *The Wind in the Willows*, is for sale. The Grade II listed house in Pangbourne, Berkshire, has five bedrooms, three reception rooms, a kitchen-breakfast room, a utility room, two bathrooms and a boxroom. It is available through Lane Fox at £425,000.

■ THE house of sculptor John Houston is for sale. He was commissioned to sculpt the head of the late Diana, Princess of Wales, shortly before her death. He will now present the work as a gift to the National Aids Trust.

The house has three bedrooms, a bathroom, first-floor study, sitting room and kitchen-breakfast area. It is for sale through the Canterbury office of Cluttons Daniel Smith at £195,000.

■ A WARNING, monitoring and observation post at Crowfield, Suffolk is being sold at auction. The site, which measures 86ft x 50ft, comprises an underground chamber designed to accommodate several people and has a guide price of £4,000. The property is being sold through Clarke & Simpson.

■ A BUYER has been found for the penthouse at Regent's Park House in NW1, billed at one time as the most expensive flat for sale in London. It has been sold to a UK buyer for its asking price of £4.5 million. The flats will be completed by May 1999. Since the sale of the penthouse, the £14 million Belgravia flat of Sir Evelyn de Rothschild has gone on the market.

■ NEIL JORDAN, who is directing an adaptation of Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair*, is renting a house in Northumberland Place, famous as the former Notting Hill pad of Peter Mandelson.

STEVEN FLETCHER

Pull the bath plug and sprinkle the garden



Using drinking water for the garden and washing cars is a waste of resources; recycled water should be used instead

The Government is planning to introduce legislation to make both old and new homes more energy-efficient. It has already collected a raft of ideas that are being developed into practical proposals and these are due to be completed by August. The Government then plans to implement these during the first half of next year.

Water conservation is now as serious an environmental issue as CO₂ emissions and energy efficiency. Water meters are standard in all new homes and thousands of householders have elected to have them installed. Indeed, it is only now, says Ian Cook of the chartered surveyors Ekins, that consumers are beginning to realise that water, like gas and oil, is a natural commodity that has to be treated and paid for.

But recycled household water evokes all kinds of murky jokes and, as Mr Cook confirms, has a serious image problem.

"Energy savings may well be required as an integral part of the home-buying process soon. Our surveys already meet anticipated government guidelines by including energy-efficiency ratings and a list of recommended cost-effective improvements," he says. "But recycled water is known as 'grey' water, which sounds terrible. It has to be considered a safe, pleasant and jolly good idea."

Tim Rumbelow, a marketing director, thinks that recycling water is a brilliant idea and is something he is making optimum use of in his new home, a three-bedroom conversion of part of the former racing stables (built in 1838) of Calke Abbey in Derbyshire.

Diana Wildman reports on moves to recycle water in our homes — and save us money

He is building a loft-style galleried home within the original stone walls and is incorporating a simple water-filter system to pump used bath and washing-machine water into a garden sprinkler system. Later, he plans to pump this water back for flushing the lavatory.

These measures are required by the Norwich & Peterborough Building Society, the first British lender to provide "green" mortgages. Mr Rumbelow says: "I paid £40,000 for the property, plan to spend about £60,000, and obtained a Norwich & Peterborough green mortgage for £80,000, payable as work progresses, providing I fulfil certain energy-ratings criteria. The focus is on all-round environmental awareness and, as I will have a water meter, saving money. I am more and more reflective about the environment but I need to balance the financial benefits against the cost of being environmentally aware."

Robert and Melaine Kybird, friends of Mr Rumbelow, have decided to buy the adjoining section of these derelict buildings and convert them into a three-bedroom family home. Mr Kybird, 32, who has also secured a green mortgage from Norwich & Peterborough, plans to implement the same water-recycling measures as his future neighbours.

Mr Kybird says: "One of the planning conditions was that we reinstate the dry-

stone wall which once surrounded the property. I plan to tackle this as, for a while in my teens, I trained as a dry-stone waller, which of course is now extremely environmentally correct."

Sylvia Holden and her partner Carl Lewis are buying a three-bedroom house for £62,995, which is being built by Beazer Homes in Lower Darwen, Lancashire. A joint project involving Beazer and Anglian Water means that an eco-friendly, self-contained water-treatment system is being installed in all 123 homes under construction. Most waste water will be disinfected before being returned to the home to be used to flush the lavatory.

Darren Bell, of Beazer Homes, says: "Water is becoming a precious resource. Our responsibility is to be more 'water-wise' doesn't mean going short of water, but rather reducing waste by recycling. Given that more than a third of treated drinking water is flushed down the loo, our initiative is a step forward in water efficiency."

Ms Holden says: "My children study environmental science at school and know all about water recycling. They are ecologically aware and are delighted that we are using 'grey' water in our home. We have been told our water bills should be one-third less and it will be interesting to see if this is the case."

Andrea Pawell, the sales director for Linden Homes, heading her own marketing, bought a three-bedroom terraced house at Lingfield, Surrey, three years ago. Ms Pawell, 33, says: "I was not eco-conscious before but these days we are all made to feel so guilty about wasting resources so I decided on a water-efficient garden and went to a specialist landscape architect."

"Being a busy career woman, I did not want to have to start getting out a hosepipe every summer evening when I returned from the office. My 18-year-old nephew had also been telling me that I must recycle water, a fact drummed into him at school. It is natural for his generation to think that way but a complete re-education for me."

It is not only in Britain that water conservation is becoming part and parcel of house-building. Bendinat is a smart golf development on Majorca at which the latest phase of apartments, overlooking the golf course, feature a two-tier flush system in each lavatory: the short flush uses half the water of a long flush. Andrew Spence, the Bendinat marketing director, points out that as water is expensive, this alone saves owners at least £50 a year.

"We have a separate network of recycled water that we use for the gardens and golf course. The alternative is that it flows straight into the sea, which causes its own problems."

● Ekins Surveyors: 0990 404060; N & P Building Society: 01733 372372; Beazer Homes: 0161-480 7388; Linden Homes: 01883 348108; Bendinat: 0171-736 1700.

AN EXCLUSIVE PRIZE DRAW

THE TIMES



Win a cottage in Cornwall

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● Today *The Times*, in association with the Virgin One account, offers readers the chance to win a lovely cottage in the typical Cornish village of Perranwell Station. Smitty Cottage, with its two bedrooms and pretty garden, is the ideal holiday home. Close to Truro and an 18-hole golf course, our prize cottage will provide the lucky winner with the perfect place from which to watch the eclipse of the sun on August 11. **HOW TO ENTER** Collect 12 *Times* tokens and two tokens from *The Sunday Times* and attach them to an entry form which appears again on Tuesday.

Tokens will appear up to April 18 and a bonus token is published every Friday, see left. The winner will be chosen at random from all entries received by Friday, April 30, 1999. Normal *Times* Newspapers prize draw rules apply. The terms and conditions will appear again tomorrow.



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Law Report March 31 1999 Court of Appeal

Terrorism Act incompatible with Convention on Human Rights

Regina v Director of Public Prosecutions, Ex parte Kebelene and Others

Regina v DPP, Ex parte Rechachi

Before Lord Bingham of Cornhill, Lord Chief Justice, Lord Justice Laws and Mr Justice Sullivan

[Judgment March 30]

Where, pending the coming into force of the Human Rights Act 1998, the Director of Public Prosecutions had consented to prosecutions under sections 16A and 16B of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, as inserted, and those provisions were ruled at trial as incompatible with the presumption of innocence guaranteed by article 6(2) of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1953) (Cmnd 8969), it was appropriate for him, in reconsidering his consent, to take account of the probable consequences of any such incompatibility.

It was, moreover, appropriate for the Divisional Court, on a challenge to the DPP's decision confirming consent, to review the correctness of the legal basis on which he had relied and to give guidance as to the true effect of the Convention, as currently drawn, were repugnant to article 6(2) of the Convention.

The Queen's Bench Divisional Court so held, granting declaratory relief on applications by Sofiane Kebelene, Ferine Boukemih, Sofiane Souidi and Pathe Rechachi that the continuing decision of the DPP in each case under the section 16A of the 1989 Act, as amended by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, to continue their prosecutions under sections 16A and 16B of the 1989 Act, as inserted by section 32 of the 1994 Act, was unlawful.

Mr Kebelene, Mr Boukemih and Mr Souidi had been arrested and charged with an offence contrary to section 16A. At their trial the judge ruled that the section was incompatible with article 6(2) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The DPP, being asked to reconsider his consent, sought legal advice and appeared by counsel before the judge to submit that the ruling was wrong. The judge adhered to his decision and the director maintained his opinion that section 16A was not inconsistent with article 6(2).

Mr Rechachi was charged with offences under sections 16A and 16B. Following the DPP's consent to the institution of proceedings he was arraigned and pleaded not guilty.

Section 16A of the 1989 Act, as inserted, provides: "If a person is guilty of an offence if he has any article in his possession in circumstances giving rise to a reasonable suspicion that the article is in his possession for a purpose connected with terrorism, or preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism."

"(3) It is a defence for a person charged ... under this section to prove that at the time of the alleged offence the article in question was in his possession for such a purpose as is mentioned in (1) above."

"(4) Where a person is charged ... under this section and it is proved that at the time of the alleged offence - (a) he and that article were both present in any premises or (b) the article was in premises of which he was the occupier or which he habitually used otherwise than as a member of the public, the court may accept the fact proved as sufficient evidence of his possessing that article at that time unless it is further proved that he did not at that time know of its presence in the premises in question, or if he did know, that he had no control over it."

Section 16B, as inserted, provides: "If a person is guilty of an offence if he has any article in his possession in circumstances giving rise to a reasonable suspicion that the article is in his possession for a purpose connected with terrorism, or preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism."

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could not plausibly be said that ratification so long ago gave rise to a legitimate expectation.

His Lordship also rejected the assertion of a legitimate expectation, founded on the measure of retrospectivity introduced by section 22(4) of the 1998 Act once section 22(4)(b) came into force, that the DPP would meanwhile exercise discretion to refuse consent to any prosecution which would, after the provisions came into force, be held unlawful on any Convention ground.

Such an expectation was contradicted by the express terms of the Act. Parliament had thought it right, for readily understandable reasons, to stipulate that the central provisions should not come into force on the passing of the Act but on a later date to be appointed by the secretary of state.

If Parliament had intended the whole Act to take effect on its receiving the Royal Assent it would have so provided. It would in the face of that clear legislative intention if the central provisions were to be treated, in a case such as this, as having immediate effect when the Act itself provided that they should not.

Statenis by ministers concerning the future conduct of themselves and their officials could found no legitimate expectation concerning the future decisions of the director since he, like the law of the land, was wholly independent of the executive when making decisions on the conduct of criminal proceedings.

It was his public duty and responsibility to exercise his own judgment. He could not be bound by any statement made on behalf of the executive and no reasonable person, alert to his constitutional role, could expect him to be so.

His Lordship would be extremely hesitant to hold that a legitimate expectation could be founded on answers given in Parliament to often extremely general questions.

Do so would be to invest assertions by the executive with a quasi-legislative authority, which would involve a considerable blurring of the distinct functions of the legislature and the executive.

Mr Pannick had submitted that the DPP's duty was to exercise his discretion in accordance with the law of the land, including sections 16A and 16B, and not including the central provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998.

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He had returned to the need for flexibility and balance recognised in Attorney-General of Hong Kong v Lee Kwong-kun (1993) AC 951, and that some presumptions might be necessary if certain offences were to be effectively prosecuted: see *State v Zuma* (1995) 1 LRC 145, 160.

There was a measure of truth in that argument. Any human rights instrument had to represent a compromise between the rights of the individual and those of other individuals collectively making up the community, society or state. But a human rights instrument such as the Convention was a measure to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

That did not mean that all Convention rights were equal, some might be the subject of derogation by contracting states, others not permitted to derogate, but not was it a right which was in any material way qualified.

His Lordship could readily conceive of circumstances where it would be doubtful whether the presence of a certain feature in itself undesirable was such as to render a trial unfair, but he could conceive of no circumstances where, having concluded that that feature rendered the trial unfair, and the court would not go on to find a violation of article 6.

In some cases it would undoubtedly be necessary to wait until the trial process had been concluded before forming a judgment whether the trial was fair or unfair, and since a party seeking redress from the European Court had always to have exhausted his national remedies, it was inevitable that that court would conduct a retrospective review of what had transpired in the national courts.

However, the present court was not precluded, before completion of a trial, from considering the compatibility of a provision of primary legislation with the Convention.

That approach was consistent with *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department, Ex parte Lawrence* (1997) 1 WLR 839, 870. In offering such guidance as it could on the true effect of the Convention, the court did not usurp the legislative responsibility of Parliament nor the independent decision-making responsibility of the director so long as it left the final decision to him.

Compatibility of sections 16A and 16B with article 6(2).

The applicants had submitted that the presumption of innocence was undermined if a legal burden was placed on a defendant to disprove any substantial ingredient of the offence of which he was accused.

It was, they said, otherwise in the case of an exception, exemption, proviso, excuse or qualification which was reasonable in effect and did not constitute the gravamen of the offence and they accepted that in some circumstances there was never any issue as to whether the burden was placed on the defendant.

Mr Pannick pointed out that the European Court accepted presumptions of fact or law as permissible so long as they were confined within

reasonable limits, taking account of the importance of what was at stake and maintaining the rights of the defence and that that court recognised the need to strike a fair balance between the demands of the general interest of the community and the requirements of the protection of an individual's fundamental rights.

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that was precisely the function for which sections 3 and 4 of the 1998 Act provided.

In their interpretation of statutes, British judges had no discretion: they had to give the statutory language what they took to be its ordinary and natural meaning.

Section 3(1), which enjoined on the courts a new interpretative approach, was not yet in force. If properly construed, a provision of domestic legislation truly infringed the presumption of innocence, then any conviction based on that provision was likely, judged by the yardstick of the Convention, to be unlawful.

The applicants had submitted that the lack of the court was to study the substantial effect of the relevant legislative provision so as to decide whether in practical terms it infringed the presumption.

The gravamen of the offence charged by section 16A was the possession of articles, in themselves innocent, for terrorist purposes. The crucial ingredients were in reality possession, the *actus reus*, and the terrorist purpose, the *mens rea*. But neither of those needed to be proved by the prosecution to the criminal standard to secure a conviction.

Section 16A(4) relieved the Crown of the need to prove possession in the ordinary way and placed a reverse burden on the accused. Section 16A(1) allowed the prosecution to establish the terrorist purpose by showing something short of proof and again placed a reverse burden on the accused in section 16A(4).

The accused who chose not to give or call evidence might be convicted by virtue of presumptions against him and on reasonable suspicion falling short of proof.

The gravamen of the offence charged in section 16B was the collection or possession of information, in itself, innocent, for purposes of terrorism. The *actus reus* was the collection or possession and that had to be proved to the criminal standard, but the *mens rea* was the purpose for which the information was collected or possessed. That did not need to be proved by the prosecution at all.

Instead a reverse burden was placed on the accused to prove lawful authority or reasonable excuse for collecting or possessing the information. An accused who chose not to give or call evidence might be convicted without the *mens rea* of the offence being proved.

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Clubs keep eye on star

RUGBY UNION

Logan gives Wasps semi-final boost by signing contract

By MARK SOUSTER

FIVE days before their Telford Bitter Cup semi-final against Gloucester, for which 6,500 tickets have already been sold, Wasps yesterday received another fillip when Kenny Logan, the Scotland wing, signed a new 24-year contract that will keep him at Loftus Road until the summer of 2001. Logan, 26, follows Lawrence Dallaglio, the England captain, who last week pledged his future to the club for the next two years.

Despite talk of salary caps and retrenchment, Logan said that he had agreed improved terms — reported to be in excess of £80,000 a year — with the club that he joined from Stirling County in 1997. The announcement marks a significant turnaround in the fortunes of the wing, who has 38 caps. At the end of last season he was on the transfer list, having lost his club and

international place, as well as his appetite for the game. He was overweight, injured and thoroughly disenchanted. "I felt I had let Nigel Melville down," Logan said. "He was the reason I moved from Scotland. But I wasn't enjoying rugby. I had a back injury and self-doubt crept in. I was wondering, 'Is this me? Is this as far as I can go?'"

The break-up in his relationship with Kirsy Young, the Channel 5 newsreader, did not help, nor the fact that he was trying to run the 300-acre family farm from London. But after a summer off, during which time he shed a stone, he returned physically fitter and mentally sharper. "The end of the relationship enabled me to focus on rugby," Logan said. "I am a very

determined person. I have grown up quickly and matured. I have proved you can be considered a failure and yet come back a better player."

Although Dallaglio and Logan will take a sizeable chunk of the club's wage bill, at present £1.8 million a year, Nigel Melville, the director of rugby, said that he supported the implementation of a salary cap for team squads, which would "stop the degree of irresponsibility that we all know exists."

Simon Crane, the chief executive of Loftus Road plc, said that finance at the company, which also includes Queens Park Rangers football club, had been stabilised after a successful £2.4 million rights issue and a loan of £1.4 million from Chris Wright, the chairman. The company is also hoping to sell part of the Sudbury ground for housing, which, with planning permission, could be worth £7 million.

Logan, who in the absence of the injured Gareth Rees, successfully assumed the goalkeeping duties, with a strike rate of 75 per cent, has a slight ankle strain but is expected to be fit to face Gloucester as Wasps attempt to reach Twickenham for the second successive year. Peter Scriven, who sustained concussion at Welford Road on Saturday, is the only definite non-starter in a side that Melville is due to name today.

Newcastle, who meet Richmond in the first semi-final, will tonight be without Marius Hurter, the prop forward, for the Allied Dunbar Premiership match against London Scottish at Kingston Park. Hurter has a neck injury and is replaced by Ian Peel, who is also on standby for the cup-tie at the Madejski Stadium. Hurter sees a specialist today.

Otherwise, Newcastle are at full strength. London Scottish are missing Rommie Eriksson, the former Scotland centre.

Richard Metcalfe, the Northampton and Scotland A lock forward, goes into hospital today for an operation on a slipped disc, and will miss the remainder of the season and Scotland's summer tour to South Africa.

Clubs keep watchful eye on state of union

By CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

AFTER three years in which rugby league's supply of players from union has all but dried up, the imminent expiry of the first professional contracts is prompting renewed interest from league clubs in players switching codes.

Several leading English union clubs are cutting back their playing staffs to keep within the salary cap next season and developments are being closely monitored at league level.

Peter Deakin, the new chief executive of Warrington Wolves, does not think that there will be a mass exodus because of the money still available in union. "Players being cut at the top level are more likely to drop down a division, but there will always be those who want to prove themselves in league," he said.

Warrington had not pursued an interest in Dominic Chapman, the England wing, who was released

by Richmond earlier this month, but the club has taken Alex Bennett from Saracens on loan for three months as part of an alliance between the two clubs. Deakin finishes as sales and marketing director at Saracens in May.

Bennett, a talented forward, who broke his arm early in the season, made his league debut in the Warrington reserve team last week. Paul Sampson, the Wasps and England wing, has been approached by Castleford Tigers.

John Kear has been made England coach for the two international matches against France, whom he coached last season, in October. Kear said that he was flattered to be mentioned as a possible replacement for Graham Murray at Leeds Rhinos next season. A clause in Kear's contract at Sheffield Eagles allows him to take up either the Leeds or Great Britain jobs.



Marco Antonio Barrera, who many believe might seriously challenge Naseem Hamed, could be the World Boxing Organisation (WBO) featherweight champion's next opponent after Paul Ingle, whom Hamed meets on April 10 (Srikumar Sen writes). Frank Warren, the promoter, said: "After Ingle, Naz is off to the States to fight there. Don't look around for an opponent, we've got one here. Marco would fight him tomorrow. He can take a shot and the body shots he throws will give Naz a lot of problems." As the WBO super-bantamweight champion, Barrera, above, said that he preferred to meet Hamed at a weight between 126lb and 122lb. Warren said: "I

know Naz can make the weight." He added that if Hamed refused to come down to an agreed weight, the Mexican might be persuaded to go up. Warren said that it might be possible to move Barrera into the position of mandatory featherweight challenger if he retained his title against Paul Ingle, of Ellesmere Port, at the Albert Hall on Saturday. If Warren won the purse bid for a Hamed-Barrera contest, he said that he would stage it at the Forum in Los Angeles, where Barrera has a huge following. Warren, who used to be Hamed's promoter, said: "One of the things I've always wanted to get on was Naz against Marco. He would be Naz's toughest opponent."

DRUGS IN SPORT

Weightlifting under heavy fire

By JOHN GOODBODY AND DAVID POWELL

BRITISH weightlifting was warned yesterday that its annual funding, worth £125,000 in this financial year, may be withdrawn unless a satisfactory explanation can be given as to why a leading competitor was not banned after providing an irregular drugs sample.

As the result of the doping inquiry into Dougie Walker, the European 200 metres champion, was unexpectedly delayed, the UK Sports Council (UKSC) demanded answers on the clearing of Paul Supple, the weightlifter barred from going to the 1993 Commonwealth Games.

Supple recorded a testosterone/epitestosterone ratio above 6:1 in an out-of-competition test last August but the British Amateur Weightlifting Association ruled two weeks ago that it could not be sure that an

offence had been committed. However, the UKSC said yesterday: "We want to be reassured that the disciplinary process has been managed effectively and have requested clarification from the governing body to that effect. The council will consider the governing body's response in determining its next steps."

Walker, who returned a positive sample in an out-of-competition test in December, was expected to learn yesterday whether he had a case to answer. However, the panel looking into his case was unable to deliver its verdict because of a delay in clarifying a scientific detail.

The hold-up occurred because the panel's chairman, Michael Beloff, QC, was on a lecture tour in the United States and was communicating by fax with other members of the inquiry team.

Bryan Bronson, of the United States, the leading 400-metre hurdler in the world, has been suspended while the International Amateur Athletic Federation considers an adverse finding against him in Rome last July.

In France, Richard Vireneque, four times King of the Mountains in the Tour de France, has been charged with a criminal offence under anti-doping laws. Vireneque, who used to ride for Festina, is alleged, by the team's masseur, to have been injected up to 100 times a season with EPO, a drug that enhances stamina.

SPORT IN BRIEF

Vireneque on trial for drugs offences

■ **CYCLING:** Richard Vireneque, the former leader of the Festina team who was expelled in disgrace from the Tour de France last summer, has been formally charged by the French authorities under the 1989 anti-doping act. Vireneque has been charged with conspiracy to make available and use doping products and for conspiracy to import, purchase, and make available poisonous substances.

The Frenchman has consistently protested his innocence, insisting that he was "never knowingly doped" despite being repeatedly implicated by his former Festina masseur, Willy Voet, and by several of his former team-mates, three of whom are serving long-term bans from the sport after admitting to the use of banned red blood cell booster, EPO.

■ **BASKETBALL:** Worthing Borough Council after negotiating a move to Brighton next season. The council is disappointed at the decision after investing heavily in the club earlier in the decade.

■ **HOCKEY:** England thrashed South Africa 6-2 in Buenos Aires on Monday night to maintain an unbeaten record on their South American tour. Pearn and Giles each scored twice.

■ **ICE HOCKEY:** Wayne Gretzky, of the New York Rangers, became the all-time leading scorer in North American professional ice hockey when he scored the 1,072nd goal of his career against the New York Islanders.

■ **BADMINTON:** Ray Stevens has been made national coach for three months until a full-time appointment is made. Stevens will now be coaching England's leading singles players in the build-up to the world championships in Copenhagen on May 10-23.

Court of Appeal

German asylum figures relevant

Regina v Secretary of State for the Home Department and Another, Ex parte Gashi Before Lord Justice Evans, Lord Justice Thorpe and Lord Justice Buxton

[Judgment March 25]

Statistics of the outcome of applications for asylum by Kosovar Albanians in Germany should have been taken into account by the Secretary of State for the Home Department in considering the removal of an applicant to Germany under section 2 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 authorising his removal to Germany, and a consequential decision by an immigration officer of April 7 refusing him leave to enter.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment allowing the appeal of Benita Gashi against the dismissal by the Queen's Bench Divisional Court on November 6, 1998, of his application for judicial review of the decision of the Home Secretary on March 16 to issue a certificate under section 2 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 authorising his removal to Germany, and a consequential decision by an immigration officer of April 7 refusing him leave to enter.

The applicant, an ethnic Albanian, Kosovo, arrived in Germany in October 1996. His application for asylum was rejected, he was required to leave and claimed asylum when he came to England in December 1997.

Mr Manjit Gill and Mr Asoka Disnayake, for the applicant, relied on the decision of the Queen's Bench Divisional Court in *Regina v Secretary of State for the Home Department and Another, Ex parte Gashi* (1998) 1 WLR 1569, 1576 and *Judicial Review* (1998) 1 WLR 1569, 1576 and *Judicial Review* (1998) 1 WLR 1569, 1576.

LORD JUSTICE BUXTON said that the present case concerned the decision to issue a certificate in the face of evidence that a very high proportion of Kosovar applicants

to the German authorities or courts were in fact refused asylum and, subject to administrative issues, returned to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

[Amnesty International, Bonn, said that 4.5 per cent Yugoslav asylum applications were successful in 1996-2.5 per cent in 1997 and 2.7 per cent in 1998.]

Among the propositions established as governing the court's review of the secretary of state's exercise of his powers under section 2(2) were the standard to be applied in the process of scrutiny that there should be no real risk that the asylum seeker would be sent to another country otherwise than in accordance with the Geneva Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) (Cmd. 9171) and (Cmd. 3906).

When considering whether there was a real risk of the third country acting in breach of the Convention, the legal rules and procedures of that country were not to be examined in over-technical terms.

The examination had to recognise that there might be legitimate differing approaches to the Convention terms see *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department, Ex parte Juyalari* (The Times June 16, 1998) [1998] INLR 472, 483, 486.

Further, the scrutiny demanded was not only as to the jurisprudence but also as to the practice of the third country: see *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department, Ex parte Canbolat* (1997) 1 WLR 1569, 1576 and *Judicial Review* (1998) 1 WLR 1569, 1576.

Among Mr Gill's submissions was the contention that it was irrational of the secretary of state to contemplate returning Kosovar asylum seekers to Germany when

the evidence suggested that their cases would be treated so much differently than if they had been recognised figures something of the way that certain categories of evidence need not be considered at all. Indeed, the secretary of state in that case relied on statistics as to recognition rates as part of his case (p 482).

Second, it was wrong to claim that the secretary of state was entitled to rest on a general assumption that the German practice applied the Convention, and thus transfer the burden on the applicant of displacing that assumption.

The anxious scrutiny required of the secretary of state demanded scrutiny of all the evidence, and when part of that evidence called for an explanation in terms of the safety with which certificates could be issued, it was the secretary of state to seek that explanation.

In the present case, and giving full weight to the evidence relied on by the secretary of state, the statistics did call for an explanation. No attempt was made to seek it in the evidence. It was the secretary of state to seek that explanation.

There was no indication in the secretary of state's evidence that he or his officials assessed the figures at all, or even to indicate why he thought them irrelevant. Even if, therefore, his Lordship was uncertain whether the point could be considered at all, the secretary of state's argument was in any event plainly wrong.

First, there was no question that the Court of Appeal in *Judicial Review* gave what was called a clean bill of health to the German decision-making process.

Not only was that case concerned with a comparatively narrow issue, but it would also go completely against the emphasis in that and other cases on anxious consideration of the circumstances to erect general rules to the effect that certain categories of evidence need not be considered at all. Indeed, the secretary of state in that case relied on statistics as to recognition rates as part of his case (p 482).

His Lordship's judgment in that case was summarised in an affidavit sworn on behalf of the secretary of state.

The applicant's solicitors were refused a copy of the letter, the secretary of state claiming litigation privilege. In his Lordship's view, claims to litigation privilege in respect of experts' reports invariably failed suspicion that something damaging was being concealed.

In a field of litigation that was not purely adversarial and in which the court had an overriding obligation to promote a welfare consideration, litigation privilege did not allow a party to the litigation to refuse the production of any expert report that had been obtained for the purposes of the case.

It seemed at the very least arguable that the principles that had curtailed the litigation privilege in that field would apply by extension to the asylum field where the future life of an individual, his well-being, safety, protection from torture or other abuse, all hung on the outcome.

Lord Justice Evans agreed with both judgments.

Solicitors: Glazer Delmar, Peckham; Treasury Solicitor.

Law Report March 31 1999

Refusal to recognise shop steward

F. W. Farnsworth Ltd v Mc Cold Before Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice Otton and Lord Justice Ward

[Judgment March 23]

An employer's refusal to continue recognising an employee as a union shop steward because of his activities in his role as shop steward.

What was not in dispute was that the employee's terms of employment had not been affected by the employer's action. The only effect of the action was to deprive the employee of his status as a shop steward and the ability to perform the activities of a shop steward in relation to his fellow employees.

The employer had submitted that under section 146(1) there had to be taken account of an employee in his capacity as an employee and it was not sufficient if the action only related to his position as a shop steward.

His Lordship found that approach to be inconsistent with the general intent of section 146(1)(b) which was to allow an employee who had, as an individual, been subject to victimisation to complain to the industrial tribunal.

The employer's argument would have had no prospect of success but for the decision in *National Coal Board v Riddaway* (1987) 1 ICR 641 which concerned section 23(1)(a) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.

The issue which divided the parties was whether the action taken against the employee had been taken against him as a shop steward or as an individual.

On the facts his Lordship would

instantly construe the words "as an individual" as applicable.

The employer claimed that the employee had been dismissed as a shop steward because he was not suited to hold that office. The employee's version was that he had been dismissed by his employer for legitimate reasons relating to his role as shop steward.

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pute between the National Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers during which members of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers had been paid an increase in wages which did not apply to NUM members.

By a majority, the Court of Appeal came to the conclusion that NUM members had been affected as individuals because they had received less pay than members of the UDM, albeit that that was a consequence of the dispute between the NUM and the NCB.

Lord Justice Nicholls had said (at p 688): "Adverse action taken against a union is not, by reason only of any consequential effect it may have on members or officers of the union, to be treated as action against individual employees. To be within the section the action has to affect the employee otherwise than merely qua member or officer of a union."

However, in his Lordship's judgment, that had to be understood in the context of the issue of fact that the court was there considering. There, action had been taken against the union but an individual had been seeking to make a claim.

Here no action had been taken against the union as a union. The only action had been against the employee who happened to be a shop steward. That was action against an individual within section 146(1).

Lord Justice Nicholls had been seeking to distinguish between action against a union, where there was no effect on individuals, from action against a union where individuals were affected in their position as employees.

His Lordship did not see anything in *Riddaway* which would have meant that an employee who was a shop steward could be victimised and he would have no remedy before the industrial tribunal as long as the action taken was limited to affecting the employee in his capacity as a shop steward.

To be dismissed as a shop steward could be extremely damaging to an employee. It would be a serious reflection on his character. The intention of the Act was to provide a remedy in those circumstances.

Lord Justice Otton and Lord Justice Ward gave concurring judgments.

Solicitors: Dibb Lupton Alsop, Sheffield; Paulston & Brewer.

Arbitrators erred in evaluating award

Danae Air Transport SA v Air Canada Before Mr Justice Longmore [Judgment February 5]

A mathematical error in an award on an arbitration agreement was an error of fact or law, and did not entitle the High Court to remit the award for reconsideration.

Mr Justice Longmore so held in the Commercial Court of the Queen's Bench Division when dismissing the application of Danae Air Transport SA that the arbitration award made in favour of Air Canada in October 1998 be remitted to the arbitrators under section 22 of the Arbitration Act 1950.

Mr Stephen Tomlinson, QC and Mr Philip Shepherd for the applicant, Mr Michael Collins, QC and Mr Vernon Flynn for the respondent.

MR JUSTICE LONGMORE said that a dispute arising from an agency agreement between the parties had been referred to arbitration. During the proceedings the respondent made an offer to settle in the form of a *Caldarbank* letter (1976) *Farm 93*, which the applicant rejected. The offer was that the re-

spondent would forgo its counterclaim and pay the applicant an additional sum.

At the conclusion of the proceedings, the arbitrators made an award to the applicant in respect of its claim, and made a lesser award to the respondent in respect of its counterclaim.

For the purposes of awarding costs, the arbitrators calculated the value of the *Caldarbank* offer as the value of the counterclaim at the time plus the additional sum and calculated the value of the award to the applicant as the claim award minus the counterclaim award.

On that basis the rejected offer was worth more than the final award to the applicant, and the arbitrators awarded the applicant its costs up to the date of the *Caldarbank* letter and awarded the respondent its costs thereafter. The arbitrators argued that the arbitrators had erred in evaluating the offer and the award, and so had awarded costs on a false basis.

His Lordship agreed that the arbitrators had erred in evaluating the offer. It was right to deduct the amount of the counterclaim for the purposes of valuing the award if it must be right to deduct

the value of the counterclaim for the purposes of valuing the offer. On the correct method of calculation the offer would be worth less than the award.

Such an error of calculation came within the ambit of section 22 as described by Mr Justice Hobhouse.

In his Lordship's judgment, the error did not constitute an excess of jurisdiction, nor a procedural misapprehension. Nor could it be argued that the arbitrators had acted on a point of law, false mathematical basis, the arbitrators had failed to exercise their discretion judiciously and so misapplied themselves.

The essence of the applicant's submission was that the mathematical error was neither an error of fact nor of law, but in his Lordship's judgment that was unsustainable.

An error of mathematics was an error of fact or of law, and there was no "technical" recognised but not abrogated by section 1(1) of the Arbitration Act 1979.

In these circumstances, if the applicant had not been excluded from appealing his Lordship would have granted an application for leave to appeal on a point of law.

Solicitors: Brown Cooper; Dibb Lupton Alsop.

Goods were lost to fraudsters

Motis Exports Ltd v Dampskibsselskabet AF 1912, Aktieselskabet and Another Before Mr Justice Rix

[Judgment March 11]

Where, to a shipping arrangement where the goods were to be reloaded on the shipper's production of the bill of lading, the goods were taken fraudulently by presentation to the shipowners by a forged bill, then the shipowners were liable to the shippers for the loss of the goods.

Mr Justice Rix so held in the Queen's Bench Division in dismissing the application of Motis Exports Ltd for the determination of preliminary issues in its case against (1) Dampskibsselskabet AF 1912, Aktieselskabet and (2) Aktieselskabet Dampskibsselskabet Svendborg for claims arising from its loss when a third party took the goods by presenting false bills of lading.

The plaintiff employed the defendants to carry its goods from China to west Africa but the bills of lad-

ing presented to the defendants after the goods had been offloaded in Africa were false and the goods were lost to fraudsters.

Mr Nigel Meeson for the plaintiff, Mr Graham Dunning for the defendants.

MR JUSTICE RIX said that the plaintiff said that the defendants were liable for delivery up of the goods without production of original bills of lading.

The defendants said that they were just as much the victims of fraud as the true owners of the cargo and that they were protected by a clause in the bill of lading which exempted them from any liability.

Was the defendant obliged to deliver against a forged bill of lading? Could a shipowner be obliged to deliver against a forged bill of lading? Clearly if the forgery was known or suspected, or if the shipowner was on notice of the possibility of forgery, the answer to both questions had to be "No".

His Lordship asked one to suppose that the forgery could not reasonably be detected. Could a shipowner be obliged to deliver against such a bill? It seemed impossible to think that he could.

He might of course be deceived, but if he obstinately refused, despite his ignorance of the deception, to deliver against the forged bill, could he be liable for that refusal to the holder of the forged bill? It could not be.

His Lordship asked one to suppose that the question was whether the shipowner was liable to deliver, that is to say, a defence to delivery against a forged bill, in ignorance of the forgery.

If that were the case it could only be by reason of an implied term. It was hard to think, however, that it was necessary to imply such a term.

In his Lordship's judgment it was no defence to a shipowner or to the defendants in this case, innocently to be deceived by production of a forged bill of lading into release of cargo.

Solicitors: Lewis Moore & Co; Stephenson Harwood.

ROWING

Hunger the starter in university challenge

Rob Hughes meets the latest member of a family for whom the Boat Race has developed into an annual obsession

The race is addictive and for those who keep coming back, the burning question is whether defeat or victory is the greater spur. The final word on the 1998 Boat Race came from Andrew Lindsay, vanquished again, bodily spent, yet so defiant of spirit: "I'll be back to put it right."

A year on, after six winter months of training six hours a day for an event that may last no more than 16½ minutes, Lindsay is true to his word. Down the 170 years that the scholars of Oxford and Cambridge have contested the Boat Race, few could have defined the essence of perseverance more than this geography student who, in his final year at Oxford University, is thus on his final attempt to win the race. He is not alone, for in the bow of the Oxford boat, Charlie Humphreys is also seeking to break a cycle of two successive defeats.

However, there is a current that runs deeper still in the Lindsay family tree, a dynastic trait, because his grandfather rowed for Cambridge in the 1930s and his uncle, Alexander Lindsay, was a beaten Oxford Blue in 1959, returning to conquer the event the next year. Indeed, that spirit of perseverance, that family reminder to Andrew Lindsay will reappear on the Thames at 1.30pm today when Uncle Alex takes part in the veterans' race, albeit that a man of 62 and his colleagues will be spared the gruelling last two miles after Hammersmith Bridge.

It is a long way down from the Isle of Skye, close to where the Lindsays come from. You would not detect those origins from the Etonian vowels of the latest member of the clan to attempt the Boat Race, but the driving force is surely

the same as that which permeated three generations of Lindsays.

"It doesn't feel like banging one's head against a brick wall," Andrew said on the banks of the Thames at Putney. "We're on line to sort this out. We have enough quality, enough proven winners in other events, to turn this thing around."

"For me, the first year was the worst. That felt like the ultimate depression. Last year, I managed to put it into perspective, and this year I'm going to share in a victory. I am certain of it."

He is not, this 6ft 1in, 14st 4lb athlete, a student who dabbles. He is dedicated to the ultimate experience and anyone who has derided the institution of the Boat Race is simply ignorant of the effort it takes. I almost wrote sacrifice, but Lindsay does not see it like that.

"I cannot have gone through three years at Oxford without rowing," he said. "I'm not someone who sees

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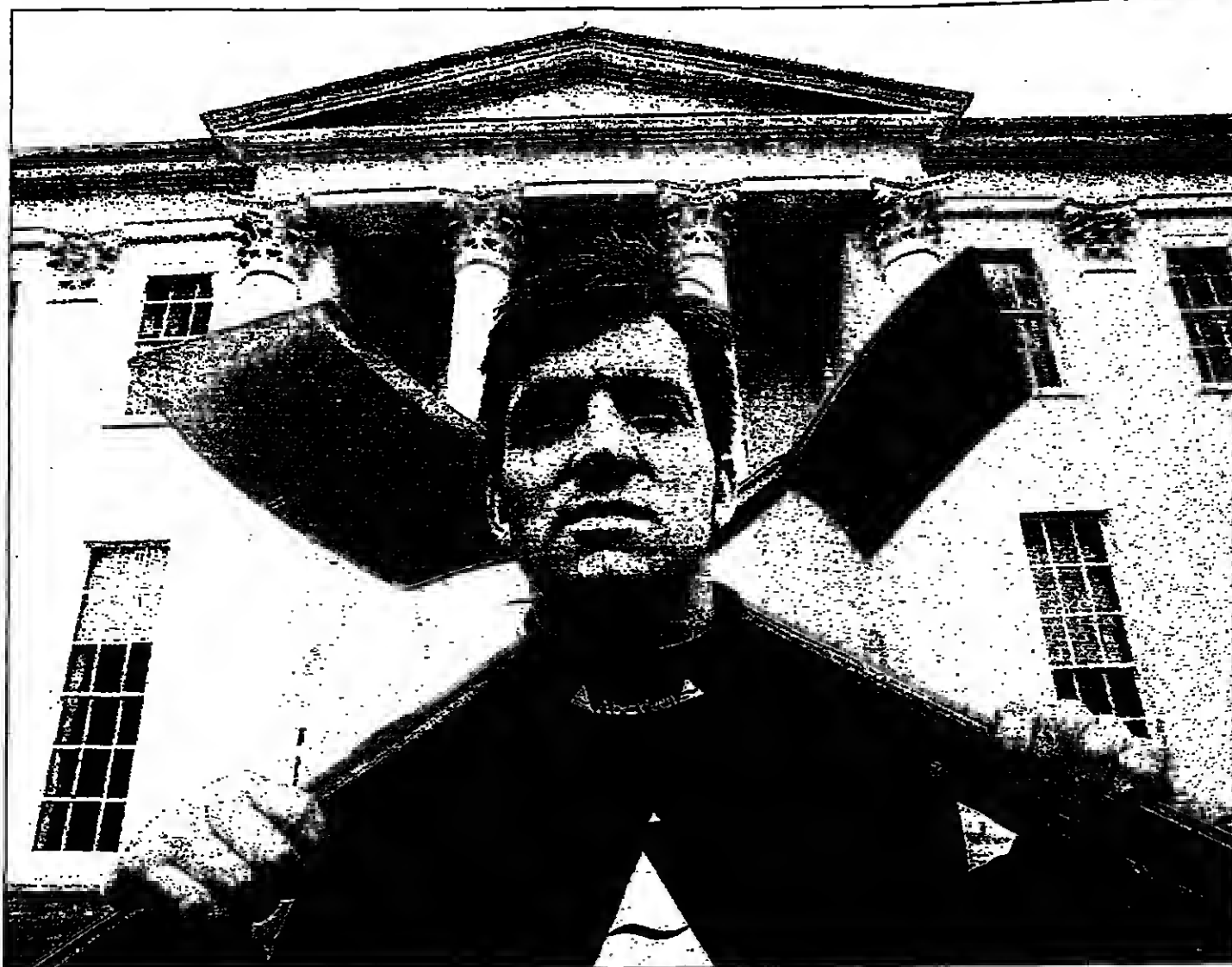
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Lindsay hopes that it will be third time lucky on Saturday for the third generation of his family to seek glory on the Thames

might be partially right. Oxford and Cambridge both employ a team psychologist. "But it is fairly limited," Lindsay said. "We know what we're coming for. It is in the nature of the beast. Rowers have a massive drive and if that wasn't there in the first place, we wouldn't go through all the effort."

You can feel, as he talks, that Lindsay, 22, is at ease with himself and his sport. His Oxford coach, Sean Bowden, has seen a change in Lindsay over the past 12 months that he said is the transition from youth to man. Yet the claim that somehow Oxford, through desire, have the advantage does not deeply impress Robin Williams, the successful coach to Cambridge.

"It still feels like all or nothing to us," Williams said. "The fear of defeat, the aim of trying to push the limits is motivation itself." And where is the spur for Brad Crombie, 28, the Canadian who is rowing for his third consecutive winning Boat Race? "Brad's motivation is that nobody wants to be a losing president," Williams said, "especially after Cambridge has won for six years. For all of us the inspiration is as fresh as if this were the first race ever held."

The talk, the verbal jousting, has gone on long enough. In both crews you sense nothing but the eagerness to turn their power into attainment on the Tideway. But for Andrew J. Lindsay there is something after the final race on Saturday.

"I want to complete my degree this summer and then attempt to make the Sydney Olympics," he said. "I have rowed in the World Cup. It doesn't compare for interest with the Boat Race."

Without false modesty, Lindsay acknowledges that he is at the peak of world rowing. "But I would not feel complete unless I became an Olympian," he said. "I wouldn't be put off if all of the IOC [International Olympic Committee] were accused of being bribed bureaucrats. I wouldn't be deterred if every competitor against us was dragged. The Olympics is still the ultimate experience." The taking part: a rounded scholar of sport indeed.

LINKS
The 1998 Boat Race will be rowed on April 3 (3.30pm) and covered live on BBC1. Website: www.bbc1.co.uk/1/SPORT/rowing

TODAY'S CUTTING:
Oxford, 8am and 12.45pm; Cambridge, 1pm. Veterans Boat Race, 1pm

Umpire promised an easier race to handle

By Mike Rosewell, Rowing Correspondent

MARK EVANS, the umpire of the Boat Race this year, will presumably make it clear at tomorrow's briefing, as umpires do every year, that he will not hesitate to use his powers to disqualify a crew if they impede the other.

In 1997, Tom Cadoux-Hudson issued 132 warnings in a classically tight race. Last year, Mike Sweeney had notched up 50 by Hammersmith before Cambridge broke clear. There has already been an informal meeting between representatives of both universities, with the coxswains present, to try to avoid the unthinkable.

Steve Royle, the Oxford rowing director, said: "It wasn't a meeting just about umpiring, it was about steering. There are no new rules and regulations. We are simply concerned about the image of the race." Robin Williams, the Cambridge coach, commented: "We want the coxswains to work with the umpire rather than test him."

Oxford showed the more impressive form in their Tideway outings yesterday, both in boat control and in terms of sheer pace.

Oxford's three minutes against Isis, no mean combination, began from a running start at the Bandstand on the flood tide. Isis were given the favourable Middlesex bend but both crews were far too close to the Middlesex bank off the start, which negated some of Isis's potential advantage. Colin von Eitingshausen, the German stroke, took Oxford off in blistering fashion and they finished some 3½ lengths ahead.

Cambridge put in two five-minute pieces and showed the occasional wobble. Harry Mahon, their final-week guru, talked them through virtually every stroke in their paddling between the rows and Williams admitted that more consistency was needed. But this is nothing new for Cambridge at the start of the final week.

MOTOR SPORT

Silverstone takes steps to resist takeover

By Kevin Eason

THE board of Silverstone today will launch a spirited defence against bids of up to £50 million to take over the home of British motor racing and rights to the British Grand Prix. Letters will arrive this morning on the doormats of the 834 members of the British Racing Drivers' Club (BRDC), which owns Silverstone, spelling out why they should not succumb to a series of tempting offers.

The main proposal is to set up a new company, geared to expand the circuit, with a 120-bedroom hotel and a much-needed bypass road, plus extra car parking. The BRDC, which includes Stirling Moss, Damon Hill and Richard Noble, the former world land speed record-holder, would hold a "golden share" in the new business in order to veto future takeover attempts.

The strategy unveiled yesterday remains high-risk, with Silverstone due to renegotiate its contract to hold the British Grand Prix with Bernie Ecclestone, the Formula One ringmaster. Silverstone holds the rights to the race until 2001 but Ecclestone is known to be unhappy with facilities at the Northamptonshire circuit, especially the traffic chaos at each race weekend.

Ecclestone is under pressure from race promoters all over the world anxious to replace Silverstone and other European venues on the Formula One calendar — particularly from the Far East, where lucrative tobacco sponsorship is still allowed. The first modern Formula One race was held at Silverstone in 1950 and the circuit retains a mystique with foreign drivers and teams.

John Lewis, a former Silverstone executive, is thought to have offered £41 million for Silverstone, coupled with radical redevelopment plans. However, Nicola Poulton, the ambitious chief executive of Brands Hatch, is thought to be waiting in the wings with a counter-offer, to add Silverstone to her portfolio of British racing circuits.

Accepting a full-blown bid now could reap as much as £50,000 for each member, although the BRDC's financial advisers, Dresner & Kleinwort Benson, are warning against a quick sale. Instead, Silverstone's board wants a radical restructuring of the business, with the BRDC retaining control. Members can vote before the annual general meeting on April 23.

AN EXCLUSIVE COMPETITION THE TIMES

WIN a complete kit for your football team

40 prizes of AXA team kits to be won

Today The Times has teamed up with FA Cup sponsors AXA to give your team the chance to win one of 40 sets of football kits, worth £500 each, and to take part in a training session with an England player.

The competition, part of a grass roots initiative by AXA to assist the development of football in the community, is open to school and club teams of all levels and standards throughout the UK.

Each of the 40 prizes consists of 14 top-quality Umbro football kits of shirts, shorts and socks, including one goalkeeper's jersey. In addition, the 40 winning teams will be invited to one of four regional venues to be presented with their new kit by a member of the England squad, including the likes of Tony Adams, Robert Lee, Nigel Martyn and Gareth Southgate. Each team will also be given training tips and have a coaching session under the supervision of some of the best players in England.

HOW TO ENTER

Complete the entry form, below, and attach a separate sheet of paper telling us (in no more than 50 words) why your team should win a new football kit. Entries must arrive by first post Monday, April 19, 1999. Only one entry per team allowed. The 40 winners will be the teams which, in the opinion of the judges, give the most apt and original reason for winning a kit for their team. Normal TNL competition rules apply. *Players may vary

THE TIMES

KITS FOR THE COMMUNITY

THE TIMES/AXA KITS IN THE COMMUNITY ENTRY FORM

Complete this form and attach a separate sheet of paper with your reasons why your team should win a new kit (50 words or less). Post to: arrive by 1st post Monday, April 19, 1999, to: The Times/AXA Kits in the Community Competition, 111, Stirling House, 81 Winchester Road, Basingstoke, Hants RG21 2UE

School/Club team name _____

Team contact: Title _____ Initials _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Day tel _____ Approx kit size (S, M, L, XL) _____

If you would prefer not to receive information and offers from organisations carefully selected by The Times, please tick ☐

Which one of the following age groups do you fall into?
☐ 15-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65-
 If you buy The Times on which day(s) do you usually buy it?
☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐ Saturday ☐ Don't usually buy The Times
 Which other national daily newspaper(s) do you buy at least once a week?
 Which national Sunday newspaper(s) do you buy almost always (3-4 copies per month)?
 Which national Sunday newspaper(s) do you buy quite often (1-2 copies per month)?

CHANGING TIMES

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By Robert Sheehan, Bridge Correspondent

The Netherlands has a reputation for staging some of the best events of the year. One of the jewels in its crown is the Forbo-Kromme International Bridge Tournament that is held in Scheveningen, just outside The Hague, every February. The organisers invite experts from all over the world. This hand was played by Portugal's Miguel Goncalves and appeared on the front page of the French magazine *Le Bridgeur*.

Dealer East	N-S game	Teams
♠ J10 ♥ Q2 ♦ AKJ1073 ♣ J102	W E S	Q95 K1093 Q94 KQ7
♠ AK ♥ AJ8764 ♦ 8 ♣ A653		

Contract: Three No-Trumps by South. Lead: eight of clubs.

Playing five-card majors East opened One Club after which Goncalves soon found himself in Three No-Trumps. Declarer covered the opening lead with dummy's ten of clubs and when East played the queen he won the trick with the ace.

The opening bid marked East with all the missing high cards and the obvious plan would be to play on hearts, surrendering a trick to the king but hoping to make five tricks in the suit to go alongside two spades, at least two diamonds and a club.

Say declarer plays a low heart to dummy's queen at trick two. He will be fine unless he loses to a singleton king with East (he will later lose a trick to West's ten and risks losing three club tricks as well as two hearts). If, on the other hand, he first cashes

the ace of hearts and the heart suit is distributed as it is here, East may duck the queen of hearts giving declarer insuperable entry problems.

Goncalves found an elegant solution to his problem that did not rely on a 3-2 break in hearts. At trick two he played a diamond to dummy's ace and continued with the king and jack of diamonds on which he discarded the ace and king of spades from his hand. East was able to win the third round of diamonds but was well and truly employed. Whichever suit he played would allow declarer to reach the dummy to enjoy the winning diamonds and subsequently finesse in hearts.

Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

TATTERDEMAILION
a. A dandelion
b. A student riot
c. A careless dresser

TOHACK
a. An Amerindian
b. To cut up
c. A New Zealand bird

UPLONG
a. A windmill strut
b. An Indonesian rice dish
c. A plunger for drains

TARBOOSH
a. Nonsense
b. A sailor's mess
c. A hat

Answers on page 46

KEENE on CHESS

By Raymond Keene, Chess Correspondent

Even younger

At the same time that Murugan Thiruchelvan, 10, was inflicting defeat on grandmaster Jonathan Levitt, the even younger David Howell, 8, was winning the Spectrum Congress in Hove.

David was seeded 25th out of the 25 players competing, but ended up sharing first prize with 4/5. In the following game he defeats Dinah Norman, a former British women's champion.

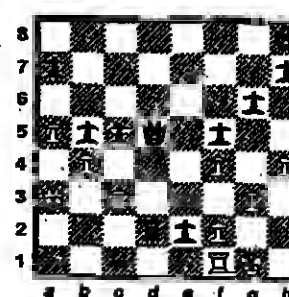
White: Dinah Norman
Black: David Howell
Hove 1999

Torre Attack	N6
1. e4	Nf6
2. Nf3	g5
3. Bg5	Bg7
4. Nxe2	d5
5. e3	0-0
6. Be2	Nd7
7. c3	Ne4
8. Nxe4	dxe4
9. Nd2	f5
10. Be4+	Kf8
11. N4	Nf6
12. Be6	Bx6
13. g3	0-0
14. e4	e5
15. dxe5	Bxe5
16. Nf3	Qe7
17. N4	Rd8
18. Qe2	e5
19. Ne2	Ba6
20. Bxe6	Qxe6
21. Rd1	Rd1+
22. Qd1	Qe7
23. Qb3	Rb7
24. 0-0	Rd2
25. Re1	Qd7

26. Nf4	Bd4
27. e4	b6
28. a5	b5
29. Qa3	Qd5
30. b4	e3
31. Rf1	e2

White resigns

Diagram of final position



Keene online

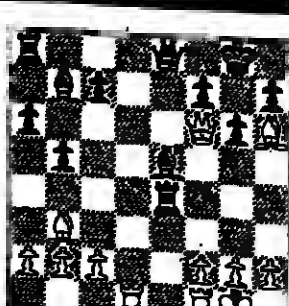
You can send me your queries, puzzles, problems and games direct by e-mail. The address is keene@chessbase.com. The best contributions from Times readers will be published either here or in the Saturday Times Weekend column.

Times book

The Times Winning Moves 2 contains 240 chess puzzles from international grandmaster Raymond Keene's daily column in The Times, and is available now from bookshops or from B. T. Batsford Ltd (tel: 01797 369666 at £6.99 plus postage and packing).

Raymond Keene writes on chess Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WINNING MOVE



White to play. This position is from the game Borik - Kohn, Germany 1999.

White's bishops are doing an excellent job of constricting the black king. How did White demonstrate their power with a fine finish?

Solution on page 46

Nichol

By Alan Lee
RACING CORRESPONDENT

THE board of Silverstone today will launch a spirited defence against bids of up to £50 million to take over the home of British motor racing and rights to the British Grand Prix. Letters will arrive this morning on the doormats of the 834 members of the British Racing Drivers' Club (BRDC), which owns Silverstone, spelling out why they should not succumb to a series of tempting offers.

The main proposal is to set up a new company, geared to expand the circuit, with a 120-bedroom hotel and a much-needed bypass road, plus extra car parking. The BRDC, which includes Stirling Moss, Damon Hill and Richard Noble, the former world land speed record-holder, would hold a "golden share" in the new business in order to veto future takeover attempts.

The strategy unveiled yesterday remains high-risk, with Silverstone due to renegotiate its contract to hold the British Grand Prix with Bernie Ecclestone, the Formula One ringmaster. Silverstone holds the rights to the race until 2001 but Ecclestone is known to be unhappy with facilities at the Northamptonshire circuit, especially the traffic chaos at each race weekend.

Ecclestone is under pressure from race promoters all over the world anxious to replace Silverstone and other European venues on the Formula One calendar — particularly from the Far East, where lucrative tobacco sponsorship is still allowed. The first modern Formula One race was held at Silverstone in 1950 and the circuit retains a mystique with foreign drivers and teams.

John Lewis, a former Silverstone executive, is thought to have offered £41 million for Silverstone, coupled with radical redevelopment plans. However, Nicola Poulton, the ambitious chief executive of Brands Hatch, is thought to be waiting in the wings with a counter-offer, to add Silverstone to her portfolio of British racing circuits.

Accepting a full-blown bid now could reap as much as £50,000 for each member, although the BRDC's financial advisers, Dresner & Kleinwort Benson, are warning against a quick sale. Instead, Silverstone's board wants a radical restructuring of the business, with the BRDC retaining control. Members can vote before the annual general meeting on April 23.

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AN EXCLUSIVE COMPETITION THE TIMES

WIN a complete kit for your football team

40 prizes of AXA team kits to be won

Today The Times has teamed up with FA Cup sponsors AXA to give your team the chance to win one of 40 sets of football kits, worth £500 each, and to take part in a training session with an England player.

The competition, part of a grass roots initiative by AXA to assist the development of football in the community, is open to school and club teams of all levels and standards throughout the UK.

Each of the 40 prizes consists of 14 top-quality Umbro football kits of shirts, shorts and socks, including one goalkeeper's jersey. In addition, the 40 winning teams will be invited to one of four regional venues to be presented with their new kit by a member of the England squad, including the likes of Tony Adams, Robert Lee, Nigel Martyn and Gareth Southgate. Each team will also be given training tips and have a coaching session under the supervision of some of the best players in England.

HOW TO ENTER

Complete the entry form, below, and attach a separate sheet of paper telling us (in no more than 50 words) why your team should win a new football kit. Entries must arrive by first post Monday, April 19, 1999. Only one entry per team allowed. The 40 winners will be the teams which, in the opinion of the judges, give the most apt and original reason for winning a kit for their team. Normal TNL competition rules apply. *Players may vary

THE TIMES

KITS FOR THE COMMUNITY

THE TIMES/AXA KITS IN THE COMMUNITY ENTRY FORM

Complete this form and attach a separate sheet of paper with your reasons why your team should win a new kit (50 words or less). Post to: arrive by 1st post Monday, April 19, 1999, to: The Times/AXA Kits in the Community Competition, 111, Stirling House, 81 Winchester Road, Basingstoke, Hants RG21 2UE

School/

McGrath fights back after West Indies captain leads the charge Lara's resistance tests Australia

FROM PAT GIBSON
IN BRIDGETOWN
BARBADOS

AUSTRALIA showed why they are the champions of world cricket yesterday by overcoming all manner of problems to withstand a brilliant century by Brian Lara, the West Indies captain and inspiration, and move to the brink of the victory that would make sure that they retain the Frank Worrell Trophy.

Only three times in their previous 350 Tests have West Indies scored more than 300 to win but they seemed capable of doing it in this third Test when Lara and Jimmy Adams, roared on by a frenzied Kensington Park crowd, were putting on 133 in just under three hours for the sixth wicket.

They were still 70 runs short of their victory target of 308, however, when Glenn McGrath, summoning up his last reserves of energy like the great fast bowler he is, squared up Adams and burst through his defence to bowl him.

Two overs later, McGrath had Ridley Jacobs and Nehemiah Perry leg-before to give himself five wickets in an innings for the fourth time in the series and leave West Indies close to defeat at 248 for eight.

So Lara's stupendous performance, which took him to his twelfth Test century in 231 minutes with a 56 and 14 fours, looked like ending in glorious failure, but not before he had again exposed the flaws that are appearing in the facade of the Australia team.

One of them was acknowledged before play even began. It was revealed that Ian Healy, whose wicketkeeping as well as his batting seem to have gone into terminal decline on this tour, is suffering from sore calf muscles and Adam Gilchrist is flying from Australia to stand by to replace him in the fourth and final Test, starting in Antigua on Saturday.

It is described as a precautionary measure but the very fact that the talismanic Healy is contemplating missing a Test suggests that he himself believes that he is coming to the end of the road after 114 matches. He has missed only one match (because of a broken thumb) since making his Test debut in Pakistan in 1988 and played through all manner of injuries in accumulating a record 351 dismissals before this match.

West Indies were in for an early disappointment when Adrian Griffith, who had made 35 in more than three hours the day before to help to give West Indies a solid foundation, was out in the fifth over. He



Flying high: Gillespie celebrates having Hooper caught behind before being forced to leave the field with a recurrent back problem

had scored only three when he got a ball that snaked between bat and pad to trap him leg-before.

Two overs later, Gillespie, for once outdoing Australia's champion fast bowler, Glenn McGrath, struck again to have Carl Hooper caught behind and West Indies hopes were resting on Lara.

He did not let them down. He has been inspirational both as batsman and captain since putting the South African fiasco behind him and Adams, who seems to have been born to follow rather than to lead, gave him all the support he needed. They were helped in two ways. First, Gillespie, who was forced out of the 1997 England tour with a chronic back injury and missed the whole of the Ashes series this winter, had to leave the

field with a strain in the same area. Second, the two leg spinners, Shane Warne and Stuart MacGill, again failed to justify the faith that their captain, Steve Waugh, has in them, even though the pitch was turning extravagantly.

MacGill was first into the fray and Lara greeted him by hitting three fours in his first over.

For a while, Waugh did not even seem to give himself his first spell of medium pace since Boxing Day, and when the great spinner did appear after lunch, Lara could not disguise his glee as a long hop sat up invitingly for him to pull for six.

That shot took Lara to 50 and seemed to release all the tension in him as he went on to take complete control. Waugh, forced to take the new ball himself because Gillespie was still off the field, was out and pulled for fours and when the smiling McGrath put Lara on his back with a short ball that cannoned off his helmet to fine leg, the pair of them engaged in an angry confrontation that seemed to say it all.

McGrath's domination of Lara was one of the main reasons why Australia ended almost 20 years of West Indies supremacy in the Caribbean four years ago, but there was no doubt who was the master now. Not that McGrath was ever going to take it lying down.

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Test grounds dig in their heels on profit-sharing

Richard Hobson says a damaging dispute hangs over the new season

Lord MacLaurin of Knebworth will take charge of possibly the most contentious meeting since he became chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board at Lord's today, for the Test-match grounds, threatening to refuse to stage five-day fixtures against New Zealand this summer unless the financial terms are improved, are standing firm.

Staging agreements for the four-match Test series due to begin on July 1 remain unsigned and the Test Match Grounds Consortium (TMGC) comprising representatives from Lord's, the Oval, Headingley, Old Trafford, Edgbaston and Trent Bridge — is seeking urgent negotiations.

While this delicate issue, potentially among the most divisive in county cricket this century, is unlikely to be resolved at the First Class Forum today, a progress report is likely to overshadow decisions taken on other matters.

Members of the TMGC will discuss their strategy over breakfast this morning, prepared to compromise on specifics but not on the principle that they merit a greater share of resources to pay for the upkeep of facilities used almost entirely for big games.

They intend to resist a reduction of commission on ticket sales from 12.5 to 7.5 per cent and also want more of the revenue collected centrally through broadcast rights and sponsorship. At present, all 18 counties receive an equal core grant.

This dispute comes at a time when the Board has been forced to cut a projected rise in profits distributed to the counties from 15 to five per cent because of a shortfall of at least £7.5 million in projected receipts. This has been caused by the failure to secure eight main sponsors for the World Cup — only four have been signed up — and by the restructuring of the £103 million television deal with Channel 4 and Sky TV.

Jim Cumbers, the Lancashire chief executive, said: "The Board has always tried to pitch the Test against the non-Test grounds when reality it is a matter between the Test grounds and the Board. The cost of staging Test cricket is climbing and we can no longer afford to finance that. We do not want to go as far as refusing to stage the games, but it has not been said idly."

Failure to resolve the issue — Cumbers believes the end of April is the absolute deadline for an agreement — would carry enormous consequences.

Because English domestic cricket is dependent on income from Tests, it is in the interests of all that international matches are staged at the biggest venues.

There would also be serious logistical difficulties as well as the possibility of legal action from dissatisfied customers who have already bought tickets, if the series against New Zealand had to be staged away from the recognised Test venues.

The most interesting vote at the meeting could come over a proposal to abandon the loss in championship matches this season, to allow the visiting captain the choice of whether to bat or bowl. Such a system operated from 1774 to 1809, when the away side also selected the pitch. There is concern that by producing surfaces conducive to their own strengths, the counties have contributed to a gradual deterioration in technique.

It seems that a year cannot pass without further tinkering to the structure. A mooted regional competition played over 25 overs per side from the year 2000 at least has a certain attraction as the game tries to broaden its appeal, not least because it will mirror much of the cricket played at secondary school and junior club level. Games are projected to run from 5pm to 8.30pm.

The expansion of the National League — the two-division replacement for the Sunday League — from 16 to 24 teams, and the return of the Benson and Hedges Cup, supposedly put to rest last season, may have less sense. Counties must weigh corporate opportunities against the increased demands on players.

BRIDGETOWN SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA: First Innings 480 (S. Waugh 100, R. Ponting 104, J. Langer 51). Second Innings 146 (C. A. Walsh 5 for 99)	WEST INDIES: First Innings 329 (S. L. Campbell 105, R. D. Jacobs 69)
Second Innings	
S. L. Campbell bowled McGrath 33	S. Waugh bowled McGrath 33
A. F. G. Griffith bowled McGrath 35	A. F. G. Griffith bowled McGrath 35
O. R. Jones bowled McGrath 35	O. R. Jones bowled McGrath 35
P. T. Collins bowled McGrath 35	P. T. Collins bowled McGrath 35
C. L. Hooper bowled McGrath 35	C. L. Hooper bowled McGrath 35
J. C. Adams bowled McGrath 35	J. C. Adams bowled McGrath 35
R. P. Jacobs bowled McGrath 35	R. P. Jacobs bowled McGrath 35

FOR THE RECORD

BASKETBALL

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION (NBA): Indiana 82 Atlanta 85, Dallas 101 Seattle 105, Denver 100 Los Angeles Clippers 88, Los Angeles Lakers 116 Vancouver 98

CRICKET

One-day international: New Zealand v South Africa

Wellington (South Africa won toss): Wellington 100, New Zealand 100

South Africa: C. Krieger 49, P. Langer 45, N. Krieger 45, N. Krieger 45, N. Krieger 45

New Zealand: C. Krieger 49, P. Langer 45, N. Krieger 45, N. Krieger 45, N. Krieger 45

PEPSI CUP

India v Sri Lanka

Pune (Sri Lanka won toss): India 248, Sri Lanka 248

India: S. Tendulkar 100, S. Tendulkar 100, S. Tendulkar 100, S. Tendulkar 100, S. Tendulkar 100

Sri Lanka: S. Tendulkar 100, S. Tendulkar 100, S. Tendulkar 100, S. Tendulkar 100, S. Tendulkar 100

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to soliciting our sympathy for these men and women when it is the victims and *their* relatives who deserve it more? Maybe, but she has uncovered a rare seam of tragedy and mined it sensitively enough to make it seem moving rather than macabre.

One of the rare moments of lighter relief in Roger Graef's fascinating fly-on-the-wall documentary *The Siege of Scotland Yard* (Channel 4) was watching Sir Paul Condon, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, lumbering up for his mauling by the press on publication of the *Macpherson* report into the Lawrence inquiry by pretending to be Jeremy Paxman.

As a colleague attempted to reply, Condon would interrupt, bang the table and demand an answer: "His high lord Jeremy Paxman is misusing words! Clearly, it's not just institutional racism this country has to be worried about. It's institutional Pavlovism!"

Joe
Joseph



The local council's planning committee has passed it, which is enough to make you faint, considering that local council planning committees traditionally show the aesthetic sensibility of tree bark.

BBC1 BBC2 BTW CENTRAL CHANNEL 4 CHANNEL 5

<p>8.00am Business Breakfast (74500) 7.50 BBC Breakfast News (1) (36257) 9.00 Xinyi (1) (203589) 9.45 Style Challenge (702324) 10.10 The Vanessa Show (1) (782438) 10.35 News: Weather (1) (3577325) 11.00 Change That (3587702) 11.15 Can't Cook, Won't Cook (1) (3557561) 11.55 News: Weather (1) (7442899) 12.00 Call My Bluff (89948) 12.30pm Wipeout (4018257) 12.55 The Weather Show (1) (53152257) 1.00 Onk O'Clock News (1) (39344) 1.30 Regional News: Weather (59074832) 1.40 Neighbours The camping trip ends in disaster (1) (35114290) 2.05 Through the Keyhole (1) (5905219) 2.35 Midweek Racing from Ascot including coverage of the 2.40, 3.10 and 3.40 races (605580) 3.50 CBBC: ChuckleVision (4976677) 4.10 See it, Saw it (5918868) 4.35 The Wild Horse (6555035) 5.00 Newsround (4210561) 5.10 Blue Peter (9914948) 5.35 Neighbours (1) (1) (532783) 6.00 Six O'Clock News: Weather (1) (685) 6.30 Regional News Magazine (615) 7.00 Holiday on a Shoestring Craig Doyle in Brighton, Sarika Guba in New York and Hoy Samos in St Tropez (416) (1) (9412) 7.30 Tomorrow's World Reports on the discovery of a gene which predisposes people to stomach cancer (1) (899) 8.00 Only Fools and Horses Del gets invited to a school reunion (1) (1) (25673) 8.50 The National Lottery: Greatest Hits with Angela Griffin (1) (183696) 9.00 Nine O'Clock News: Regional News: Weather (1) (19493) 9.20 National Lottery Update (40832) 9.30 Jasper Carrott: Back to the Front Last in the series (1) (36966) 10.00 CHOICE Laughter in the House: The Story of British Sitcom Seventies sitcoms (2/3) (1) (771054)</p>  <p>Jonathan Ross presents reviews of the latest releases (1.10.50pm)</p> <p>10.50 Film 99 with Jonathan Ross Review of Plunkett and MacLeane (1) (361232) 11.20 The Word on the Street The pleasures and pitfalls of money (4/7) (295525) 11.35 Mr Baseball (1993) Sporting comedy starring Tom Selleck as a fading baseball star offered the chance to rejuvenate his career with a Japanese team. Directed by Fred Schepisi (1) (47122) 1.15am Weather (5089975) 1.20 BBC News 24 (72904068)</p> <p>10.50 The Slate (1) (91568) 11.30 Film 99 with Jonathan Ross (1) (85059) 12.00 The Word on the Street (4/7) (405623) 12.15am Welsh Questions (57878) 12.45 FILM: Mr Baseball (1) (41948) 2.25 News: Weather (1) (115159) 10.25 Turning Points (524770)</p>	<p>7.00am Children's BBC Broadcast Show: Polka Dot Shorts (2271035) 7.10 The Silver Brumby (8280260) 7.30 Inch High Private Eye (9303344) 7.55 The Bobs Meister (8901580) 8.20 Buried Treasure (5504054) 8.40 The Really Wild World (3377890) 9.10 Goobler and the Ghost Chasers (874211) 9.35 Student Bodies (5292342) 10.00 Teletubbies (80967) 10.30 FILM: Huck and the King of Hearts (38898) 12.00 Wildlife Showcase (89290) 12.30pm Working Lunch (47702) 1.00 Bum (89471832) 1.10 The Leisure Hour (2/20) (1) (9427561) 2.10 Sporting Greats (58005832) 2.40 News: Weather (1) (3704122) 2.45 Westminster (1) (6421500) 3.50 News: Weather (1) (8085059) 3.55 Kaye (933189) 4.25 Ready, Steady, Cook! (1) (8610344) 4.55 Esther (1) (1) (5695325) 5.30 Whose House? (764) 8.00 Star Trek: The Next Generation The Enterprise's shields are penetrated by an alien probe (1) (1) (528985) 8.45 Buffy the Vampire Slayer Buffy announces that her days as a Slayer are over (1) (484899) 7.30 Sophie Grigson's Herbs The cook demonstrates seasonal recipes using edible flowers (1) (141) 8.00 University Challenge Open University take on Birbeck College (1) (8702)</p>  <p>More fashion and beauty tips introduced by Loretta Turner (8.30pm)</p> <p>8.30 Looking Good The team offer advice on achieving the gypsy style (1) (2509) 9.00 The Good Life Tom decides that every resource must be utilised - even animal dung (1) (1) (7035) 9.30 Trouble at the Top Cameras follow a group of businessmen as they try to reverse the falling fortunes of the former Victoria restaurant chain (1) (521986) 10.10 The Car's the Star E-Type (1) (894851) 10.30 Newswatch (1) (641598) 11.15 Young Musicians Opportunities for musical development (2/22) (792967) 11.55 Weather (1) (45181) 12.00 Despatch Box (94888) 12.30am BBC Learning Zone: Open University: A Formidable Few 1.00 Sex and the Single Gentle 1.30 The Art of Breathing 2.00 Exam Revision: GCSE: Business Revision - Mathematics 1.40 Languages: Espana Viva! 5.00 Business and Training: So You Want to Work in Social Care? 5.30 20 Steps to Better Management: Making the Most of Yourself 5.45 Open University: Samples of Analysis 6.10 Environmental Solutions? 6.35 Large Scale Production</p> <p>6.45pm The Car's the Star (1) (778073) 7.05 Euro 2000 (40049577) 9.15 University Challenge (255463) 9.45 Trouble at the Top (115159) 10.25 Turning Points (524770)</p>	<p>5.30am ITV Morning News (10870) 6.00 GMTV (529257) 9.25 Trisha (1) (421988) 10.30 This Morning (1) (4036580) 12.15pm HTV News (1) (4524122) 12.30 TV Lunchtime News: Weather (1) (400325) 12.55 Shortland Street Nick and Rachel get acquainted (9430035) 1.30 Home and Away Natalie makes a shocking discovery (1) (35143702) 1.55 The Jerry Springer Show Outrageous American talk show (1) (1284126) 2.40 Wheel of Fortune (1) (8512734) 3.10 HTV News Headlines (1) (4275219) 3.15 HTV News (1) (4267290) 3.20 CITY: Mopopolis Shop (4288783) 3.30 ToyCabs (324868) 3.40 Jurnani (9306230) 4.05 Hey Arnold! (8991219) 4.35 Wilcocks (3374341) 5.00 Home and Away (1) (1) (4344) 5.30 WEST: Live and Local Richard Wyatt and Polly Lloyd report from a different location in the region each week; HTV Weather (2/0) 5.30 WALES: Up Beat Pop Culture (1) (290) 6.00 HTV News (1) (431) 6.25 HTV CrimeStoppers (151257) 6.30 HTV Evening News: Weather (1) (783) 7.00 Emmerdale Mandy is held captive in her own home (1) (4580) 7.30 Coronation Street Ken and Deirdre look to the future (1) (967)</p>  <p>The unusual competition winners Greg and Carla (8pm)</p> <p>6.00 Two Strangers and a Wedding Part One. Full story of Greg Cordell and Carla Gemaine, the competition-winning couple whose prize was to marry each other in an all-expenses-paid ceremony - even though they'd never met. Including the Lottery result (1) (9509) 9.00 CHOICE Hunting Venus A former injured baseball player accepts the task of coaching an inexperienced Russian team. Comedy with Joe Mantegna and Michael Lerner. Directed by Tommy Lee Wallace (725431) 1.20am Confidential (1986) A reporter is murdered while diving into a 30-year-old murder, prompting a hard-bitten detective to take over the investigation. Thriller, starring August Schaberg. Directed by Bruce Pittman (827791) 3.05 Trisha Show earlier (1) (1) (8578178) 4.10 Living A Bug's Life Behind the scenes of the Disney animation (41141064) 4.35m TV Nightvision Behind the scenes of ITV programmes (42628604) 5.00 Coronation Street (1) (45401)</p>	<p>As HTV West except: 12.20-12.30pm Central News: Weather (7762290) 12.55 Home and Away (4011344) 1.25 The Jerry Springer Show (4883238) 2.10-2.40 Echo Point (56922986) 3.15-3.20 Central News: Weather (4267290) 3.30 Shortland Street (290) 6.00-6.30 Central News at Six: Weather (431) 11.15-11.25 Central News: Weather (579073) 4.05am Central Jobfinder '99 (795246) 5.20-5.30 Asian Eye (9821130)</p>  <p>As HTV West except: 12.15pm Westcountry News (45241</p>
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SATELLITE, CABLE AND DIGITAL

[illegible]



ROWING 42

Youngest generation
is fired by
annual obsession

SPORT

WEDNESDAY MARCH 31 1999

SWIMMING 46

Hickman takes heart
as he splashes
into familiar pool



Doubts cast on England future

Injury forces Atherton out of World Cup

By RICHARD HOBSON

ENGLAND'S preparations for the cricket World Cup suffered their first setback yesterday when Michael Atherton pulled out of the 15-man squad after another recurrence of his back problem. Given the nature of the condition that has caused him to miss three international matches in the past eight months, there is now a serious question over his future at that level.

Atherton told David Graveney, the chairman of selectors, that he was not fit enough to continue, having sat out the first day of practice in Lahore, where England are preparing for a World Cup warm-up tournament in Sharjah next week.

The problem resurfaced when Atherton flew back from Lancashire's pre-season tour of South Africa and on to

Pakistan in quick succession. "I have suffered a reaction and I realise I cannot guarantee full fitness," Atherton said.

A final squad has to be lodged with the International Cricket Council today, although there is still provision to make alterations when injuries arise at any stage before or during the tournament. The hope that Atherton could withstand an event spanning up to ten matches in five weeks, despite a problem increasingly prone to flare up at a moment's notice, always seemed optimistic.

That England should have been prepared to take such a risk by choosing their former captain indicated the value placed on his ability to anchor the innings. He was a valuable asset in conditions favouring seam and swing, which

mitigate against batsmen happier to hit through the line, and as Graveney discussed a replacement with Graham Gooch and Mike Gatting, his fellow selectors, last night, the lack of another batsman in the same mould and of equal experience became apparent.

Rather than call up Ally Brown, a more flamboyant performer in the one-day game, the selectors may decide that Andrew Flintoff and Vince Wells already provide back-up for Alec Stewart and Nick Knight as openers. Such thinking could lead to a recall for Nasser Hussain, who was unlucky to be omitted in the first instance after his performances in the recent one-day series in Australia.

While his withdrawal is undoubtedly a significant blow, it is better that Atherton, who passed a series of assessments to the satisfaction of Wayne Morton, the England physiotherapist, two weeks ago, has taken the decision so far ahead of the game against Sri Lanka that opens the World Cup on May 14.

"He realised he wasn't doing himself any favours and he was probably going to let the rest of the team down if he tried to pretend he was fit," Morton said. "We appreciate his honesty, but Lahore was always going to be stage two of his fitness test." This remains the case for Graham Thorpe, Neil Fairbrother and Ian Austin. As with Atherton, their selection depended on proving their fitness by March 15.

Atherton, 31, will take further medical opinion on the degenerative condition in the spinal column, known as chronic spondylitis, when he returns home later this week. He is unlikely to feature for Lancashire until the end of May. "I am going to take time out to get fully fit before I play again, but I believe I will get fit and will play again," Atherton said.

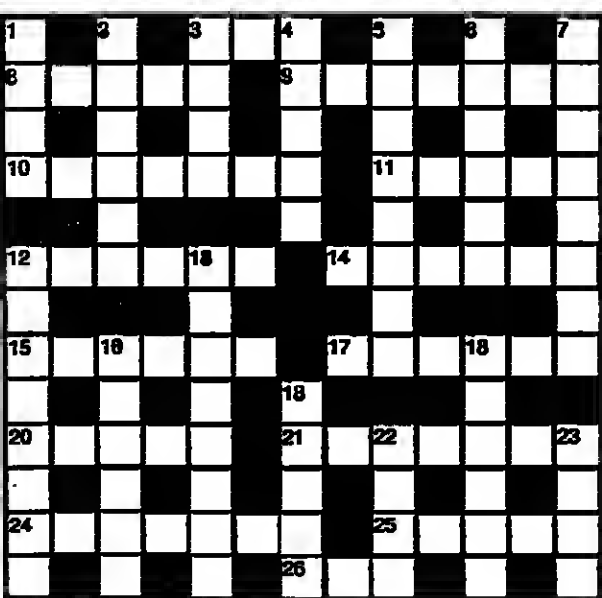
His initial target is the first Test match against New Zealand at Edgbaston, allowing little time to find his form at county level. In recent years his returns for Lancashire have been disappointing and it remains to be seen whether his back is able to stand up to the stress of playing day-in, day-out.

Graveney said: "His desire to play for England is as strong as it has ever been and he still feels he has a lot to offer. But as selectors we would need to be convinced over a long period of time that he is pain-free, injury-free, and that he would be performing for Lancashire. We would want to see him play a continuous length of cricket before we went down that path."



Atherton reflects on his decision at the England hotel in Lahore.

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1679

ACROSS

- 3 Buddy (5)
- 8 Green felt (5)
- 9 Reluctance to move (7)
- 10 Trebled (7)
- 11 Hurt (5)
- 12 Skilled painter (6)
- 14 Interfere (6)
- 15 Vigorous struggle (4)
- 17 Leave without wind (6)
- 20 Hilarity (5)
- 21 Tattlers (7)
- 24 Acrobat: a glass (7)
- 25 From the country (5)
- 26 "— for one, one for —" (Dumas) (3)

DOWN

- 1 Down for the night (4)
- 2 Card game: a patrol (6)
- 3 Make (coffee, job benefit) (4)
- 4 Trail of rain-forest plant (5)
- 5 Lawyers' jargon (8)
- 6 Eaten out by acid (6)
- 7 Revere (8)
- 12 Robots (8)
- 13 Sam. Smiles how to get on book (4-4)
- 16 Be parsimonious (6)
- 18 Swear to leave alone (6)
- 19 Very (5): an extremist (5)
- 22 Twist, wine (4)
- 23 Join (heated metals) (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1678

ACROSS: 1 Hesitate 5 Oslo 9 The Merry Wives 10 Hero 11 Slender 13 Pistol 15 Simple 18 Shallow 20 Page 23 Alpha and Omega 24 Yell 25 Hellsinki
DOWN: 1 Hate 2 Sieve 3 Tremolo 4 Thrush 6 Saved up 7 Observer 8 Twee 12 Apostasy 14 Scalped 16 Impious 17 Twinge 19 Loam 21 Glean 22 Saki

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Lara plays another imperious stroke for four as he plays a captain's innings during West Indies' fightback yesterday

Lara sets up thrilling finish

THE third Test between West Indies and Australia was thrillingly poised in Barbados yesterday after another brilliant century by Brian Lara, the home captain, took his side tantalisingly close to a memorable victory.

Advantage swung through the final day as West Indies, resuming their second innings on 85 for three, and needing a total of 308 to win, lost early wickets. Gillespie first trapped Griffith, the opening batsman who had defied

Australia for more than three hours the previous day, leg-before in the fifth over, then had Hooper caught behind to leave West Indies 105 for five.

That brought Adams to the wicket and for a while, he and Lara wrestled back the initiative. The left-handers shared a partnership worth 133, taking advantage of the faltering Australian spin attack to bring West Indies to within 70 runs of victory.

However, McGrath, returning with the new ball shortly

before tea, bowled a crucial spell, taking three wickets. Lara had already made his century when Adams, on 38, had his off stump clipped by an outswinger. Jacobs fell leg-before for five soon after, then Perry perished first ball, also leg-before.

At tea, West Indies were 254 for eight, 54 runs short, with Lara and Ambrose at the crease. The four-Test series is level at 1-1.

Report, page 45

Sweden seek to maintain ascendancy over England

By MATT DICKINSON

THE celebrations over England's revival under Kevin Keegan may be put into context tonight when Sweden travel to Poland with the opportunity to establish a comfortable lead in European championship qualifying group five. Should the Swedes win easily in Chorzow, England's 3-1 victory at Wembley on Saturday will lose much of its gloss.

With three victories already, including their triumph over England, Sweden remain favourites to qualify automatically, a perception that would be greatly enhanced if they were to win tonight. England would then trail the Swedes by five points when the two countries meet at Wembley on June 5, although there is no room for error from Keegan's side in their remaining four qualifiers, whatever the result tonight.

The England coach has returned to his other job as chief operating officer at Fulham, so Derek Fazackerley, his training-ground assist-

ant at Burnham Beeches last week, will act as scout for the Football Association in Poland. The home side will hope to play with more urgency and conviction than they did at Wembley when Janusz Wójcik's team appeared to be suffering from the aftermath of the winter break. Should they triumph over Sweden, they will leap ahead of England.

Also meeting in group five tonight are Luxembourg and Bulgaria, with the latter expected to record their first victory of the campaign. The game may be watched by Peter Taylor, the England Under-21 coach, who was

upset to be told by the FA on Monday that his position would be given to Howard Wilkinson, the technical director, in June. Taylor will remain in his post until then. Wilkinson, who was heavily involved with the senior England team last week, has long felt that he should control the under-21s as part of his overhaul of the coaching of the young international teams, and Glenn Hoddle's dismissal as England coach made Taylor's position vulnerable. Taylor was a former team-mate of Hoddle's at Tottenham Hotspur and was appointed by him in 1996.

His record with the under-21s was excellent, culminating in a 5-0 victory over Poland at The Dell last Friday that put them at the top of their group. He said yesterday that he had expected to be pushed as soon as Hoddle departed. "Obviously, I want to stay in the game," Taylor said. "Howard has said he will help

me in every way. I will particularly miss the spirit among the squad and staff. I really don't think things could have gone better over the last three years." Taylor's team lost only four times in 21 games but it was not enough to save him when he met Wilkinson on Monday. "Peter Taylor was offered employment in a technical department with new responsibilities," Wilkinson said yesterday. "These responsibilities were to include coach education and involvement with international teams, which could have included the England under-21s. Peter, however, chose to decline this offer on the basis that he wanted to retain the post of manager of the under-21 team on a permanent basis." That position now goes to Wilkinson, who controls the coaching of all the junior England sides.

Simon Barnes, page 44
Scotland home in, page 44
Wales seek success, page 44
Quinn on standby, page 44

Writers to give Lewis his just reward

By SRIKUMAR SEN
BOXING CORRESPONDENT

LENNOX LEWIS can justly claim to be the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world when he receives a special award on April 9 in New York. A belt representing the three titles that Britain's World Boxing Council champion would have held had he not been dethroned by Frank Bruno in 1995, will be presented to him by his severed rivals, the Boxing Writers' Association of America.

They had robbed Lewis since he suffered his second-round defeat to Oliver McCall five years ago, and the Americans were surprised that Lewis agreed to fly to New York to be the guest of honour at their 74th annual dinner.

Chris Thorne, the chairman of the association, said yesterday: "This is the first time of its kind and we are delighted to present to Lennox Lewis the trophy of America's boxing writers. He was a great winner in his time. There can be no doubt that he is the undisputed world heavyweight champion. He should have had all the belts. The whole business left a bad taste in the mouth. We hope that the belts we are going to give him will assuage some of the bitterness."

Tom Kendall, the first loser of the Boxing Writers' Association, said: "Two years after a row Holyfield has beaten a fighter of the Year. We are very happy this time. Lennox Lewis. He did an excellent job right through in the last round. His award should do a lot for his confidence. He was the real champion."

Lewis, who has always refused to prove to the Americans that they were wrong in their assessment of his standing as the world's best, said: "I'm delighted that the boxing writers of America have decided to honour me in this way, because they were all against me at the time and I was a loser. I was a loser."

"If there were any more champions, they would like me to answer in the ring. I would be very happy to provide them with the research. The winner will be on the belt."

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